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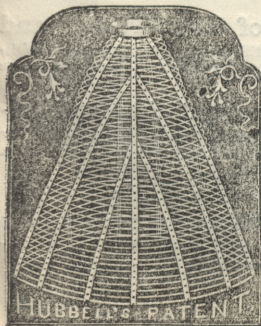
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KEATING'S PERSIAN INSECT

DESTROYING POWDER, unrivalled in destroying fleas, bugs, flies, beetles, moths, and every species of insect, and harmless to animal life. Sold in packets 1s. and 2s. 6d. each (1s. packets sent free by post for 14 stamps), by THOMAS KEATING, Chemist, 79 Paul's Churchyard, E.C.; also sold in Bottles, with labels, at 1s. 6d. and 3s.

Total eradication of Scorbatic deformities from the Face and Skin.

GREAT DISCOVERY!!

IODINE SOAP.

IT is an ascertained fact that the Quintessence of Alga, or Sea-weed, is an absolute and infallible repellent of cuticular inflammation, when repelled, may be medicinally eliminated. The precious Essence is called IODINE. This Iodine JA LEWIS has embodied in a beautiful Soap, perfectly devoid of the healthful perfumes of the ocean. The Soap is pronounced by all the Faculty the very best for health purification of the skin that is in existence.

Sold by JAMES LEWIS, at 5s. 6d. per Box, containing Twelve Squares, or at 6d. per single Square.

Manufactory—6 Bartlett's Buildings, Holborn

Cure of a Severe Cough and Influenza by



DR. LOCOCK'S
PULMONIC WAFERS

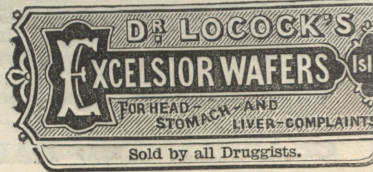
From Mr. T. F. Ker, Surgeon, 82, Moss-lane, Manchester

"I was an admiring observer of the progress of the case of Mr. James Wallerton, who for some years had been labouring under a severe cough and influenza—a degree of languor—great hoarseness—sudden fever until he tried your Wafers, and they have entirely moved all the symptoms."

They give instant relief and a rapid cure of asthmatic consumption, coughs, and all disorders of the breathing organs.

TO SINGERS AND PUBLIC SPEAKERS

They are invaluable for clearing and strengthening the Voice, and have a pleasant taste. Price 1s. 1½d., 2s. and 4s. 6d. per box. Sold by all Chemists. Small boxes containing many hundreds of Cures, may be had of every Agent.



Sold by all Druggists.

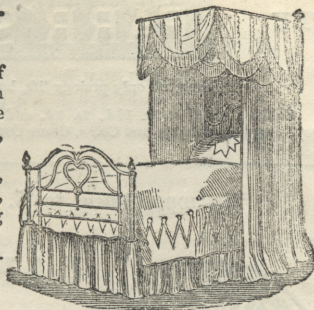
BENHAM AND SONS'

GENERAL FURNISHING IRON- MONGERY CATALOGUE

may be had Gratis and Free by Post. It contains Illustrations of
an extensive Stock of Stoves, Fenders, and Fire Irons, Kitchen
Ranges, and Cooking Apparatus, for which Prize Medals have
been awarded to them in the International Exhibitions of 1851,
1855, and 1862.

Gas Works, Gas Fittings, &c., Baths, Pumps, and Water Closets,
Water Apparatus, Conservatories, &c., Cutlery, Electro-Plate,
Urns, Lamps, and every description of General Furnishing
Ironmongery.

Iron and Brass Bedsteads and Children's Cots, Bedding, Bed-
Hangings, Blankets, &c.

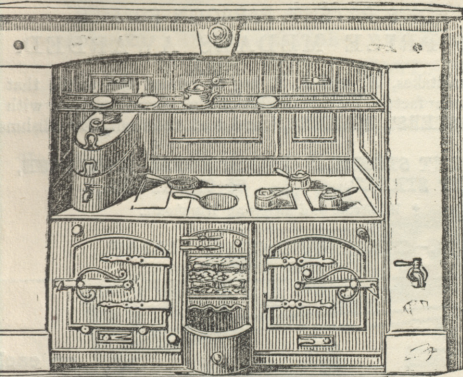


FLAVEL'S PRIZE KITCHENER,

With Patented Improvements, to which a Prize
Medal has been awarded in 1862; also the only
Kitchen Range which obtained a prize medal and
special approbation in 1851.

These Ranges are strongly recommended for
their simplicity of construction, and economy and
cleanliness in use, also as a certain cure for
smoky chimneys.

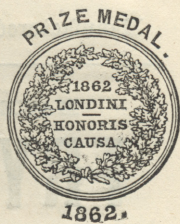
They are made from 3 feet to 18 feet in width
for large or small establishments, and may be
arranged to supply a bath, steam kettles, hot
closets, &c.



BENHAM AND SONS,

19, 20, and 21 WIGMORE STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE, LONDON, W.

"PURITY & EXCELLENCE OF QUALITY"



THE GENUINE AND DOUBLE SUPERFINE ARE THE QUALITIES PARTICULARLY RECOMMENDED FOR FAMILY USE.

RETAILED IN EVERY TOWN THROUGHOUT THE UNITED KINGDOM.

J. Colman, London

ADVICE TO INVALIDS.

TRY

PARR'S LIFE PILLS.

They not only prolong life, but, by removing pain and disease, make life more agreeable.

Sold in boxes at 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and family packets 11s., by Chemists and Druggists, and wholesale by the Proprietors, T. ROBERTS and Co., 8, Crane Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

By appointment to T. R. H. the Prince and Princess of Wales.

**SANGSTERS' UMBRELLAS,**

ON FOX'S PATENT PARAGON FRAMES.

FOUR PRIZE MEDALS AWARDED.

To prevent mistakes, W. and J. S. beg to remind the public that all goods of their manufacture have LABELS of the annexed pattern, with the words "**SANGSTERS' MAKERS**," and that their only Establishment are—

140 REGENT STREET,
94 FLEET STREET,

10 ROYAL EXCHANGE,
75 CHEAPSIDE.*

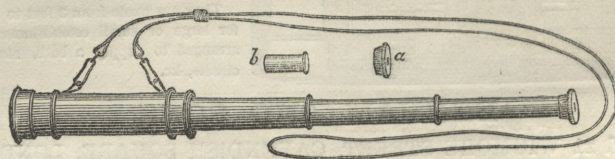
* Wholesale and Shipping Warehouse.

N.B.—OBSERVE THE NAME.

Trade

MM

Mark



on each

Telescope

THE 'DYER' TELESCOPE,

With Leather Sling and Case, 10s. 6d.; or with additional Eye-piece, 15s. 6d.

This Telescope has an Achromatic Object Glass 1-1 inch in Diameter. It possesses a magnifying power of 144 times superficial; will read a Church Clock at Four Miles, and distinguish Windows in Houses at Six Miles. The Astronomical Eye-piece and Sun-glass magnifying 324 times superficial, converts it into an Astronomical Telescope, showing Jupiter with his Satellites, the Solar Spots, Lunar Mountains, &c.

Carriage free to any Railway Station in England.

ILLUSTRATED DESCRIPTION POST-FREE.

Manufactured only by E. G. WOOD, Optician, &c., 74 Cheapside, London.

MAKERS TO THE QUEEN AND PRINCE OF WALES.

FRY'S

HOMOEOPATHIC
PEARL
ICELAND MOSS
ROCK

COCOA.

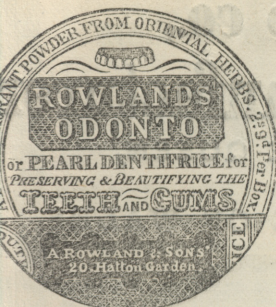
FRY'S SOLUBLE CHOCOLATE.

Fry's Chocolate for Eating, in Sticks, Drops, &c. Fry's Chocolate Creams

J. S. FRY & SONS are the ONLY English House in the trade to whom a PRIZE MEDAL was awarded at the International Exhibition 1862. The superior quality of their articles has been attested by uniform public approbation DURING A CENTURY.

WHITE AND SOUND TEETH

are indispensable to PERSONAL ATTRACTION, and to health and longevity, by the proper mastication of food.



This is a white powder of inestimable value in
PRESERVING AND BEAUTIFYING THE TEETH,
STRENGTHENING THE GUMS,
And in giving a
PLEASANT FRAGRANCE TO THE BREATH.

It eradicates Tartar from the Teeth, removes spots of incipient decay, and polishes and preserves the Enamel, to which it imparts a

PEARL-LIKE WHITENESS.

As the most efficient and fragrant aromatic purifier of the Breath, Teeth, and Gums ever known, ROWLANDS' ODONTO has, for a long series of years, occupied a distinguished place at the Toilets of the Sovereigns and the Nobility throughout Europe; while the general demand for it at once announces the favour in which it is universally held.

SOLD BY THE PROPRIETORS, AND BY CHEMISTS AND PERFUMERS.

** ASK FOR 'ROWLANDS' ODONTO.'

Two Prize Medals Awarded, 1862.

Prices from 15s. per set.

JACQUES'S CROQUET.

At all Fancy Repositories.

WHOLESALE, JACQUES and SON, 102 HATTON GARDEN.

FIRST MANUFACTURED IN LONDON,

A.D. 1742.

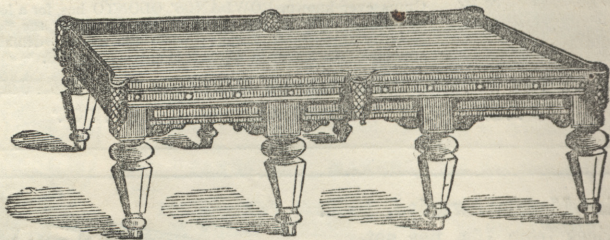


ESTABLISHED 1814.

THURSTON AND CO., Billiard Table Manufacture

TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN,
BY APPOINTMENT,

And to H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES



The great superiority of the Billiard Tables manufactured by this Firm is fully attested by their Tables having been patronized by Royalty since the reign of George III., during which period they have been honoured also by the patronage of the principal Nobility and Gentry of England, upwards of two hundred of Her Majesty's and the Native Regiments at home and abroad, and more than one hundred of the principal London, Provincial, and Foreign Clubs.

CATHERINE STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

CONSUMPTION, COUGHS, COLDS, ASTHMA, BRONCHITIS,
NEURALGIA, RHEUMATISM, SPASMS, &c.

CAUTION.—IN CHANCERY CHLORODYNE.

VICE-CHANCELLOR WOOD stated that Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE undoubtedly the Inventor of Chlorodyne. Eminent Hospital Physicians of London Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE was the Discoverer of Chlorodyne; that they prescribe it largely no other than Dr. BROWNE'S.—See *Times*, July 13, 1864. The Public, therefore, are cautioned against using any other than Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE.

THIS INVALUABLE REMEDY produces quiet refreshing sleep, relieves pain, calms the mind, restores the deranged functions, and stimulates healthy action of the secretions of the body, creating any of those unpleasant results attending the use of opium. Old and young may take it at all hours and times, when requisite.

From J. McGRIGOR CROFT, M.D., M.R.C. Physicians, London, late Staff-Surgeon to H.M. Prison, &c.
'After prescribing Dr. J. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne, for the last three years, in several cases of Neuralgia and Tic Dolorieux, I feel that I am in a position to testify to its valuable effects. Remarkable as it acted as a charm, when all other means had failed. Without being asked for this report, I come forward and state my candid opinion that it is a most valuable medicine.'

From JNO. E. GOULSTONE, M.D., Knighton.

'I can confidently state that Chlorodyne is an admirable Sedative and Anti-Spasmodic, having been used in cases of Neuralgia, Hysteria, Asthma, and Consumption, with remarkably favourable results. It relieved Asthma in four minutes, where the patient had suffered 11 years in a most distressing manner, the remedy having had so immediate and beneficial an effect.'

No home should be without it. Sold in Bottles, at 2s. 9d. and 4s. 6d. Sent free on receipt of the price by J. T. DAVENPORT, 33 Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury Square, London, W.C., sole manufacturer. Beware of cheap imitations. Observe particularly, none genuine without the words 'Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE' on the Government Stamp.

THE NEW CANDLE.

No Holder, Paper, or Scraping required

BY USING

J. C. & J. FIELD'S PATENT
HARD CHAMBER CANDLE,

Which fits any Candlestick, and burns to the end.

SOLD EVERYWHERE BY GROCERS AND OILMEN.

Only see that 'FIELD, LONDON,' is on each Candle.

Wholesale and for export at the Works, Upper Marsh, Lambeth, London, where also
may be had their richly perfumed and

CELEBRATED UNITED SERVICE SOAP TABLETS,

AND THE
PRIZE MEDAL PARAFFINE CANDLES,

AS SUPPLIED TO HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT.



Cash's Cambric Frilling



Requires neither *hemming* nor *whipping*, and is of a fine and peculiarly durable material, perfectly free from all *dress*. It is of various widths. For trimming all kinds of **LADIES' and CHILDREN'S WASHING APPAREL.**

Sold by all Drapers, in Envelopes containing 12 yards, and bearing the names of J. & J. CASH, Patentees.

This Frilling is not attached to any band, and can be sewn on with great neatness.

OSLER'S GLASS CHANDELIERS,

WALL LIGHTS AND LUSTRES, FOR GAS AND CANDLES.

TABLE GLASS, ETC.

Class Dinner Services for 12 Persons, from 7l. 15s. Glass Dessert Services for 12 Persons, from 2l.

ALL ARTICLES MARKED IN PLAIN FIGURES.

Ornamental Glass, English and Foreign, suitable for Presents.

Mess, Export, and Furnishing Orders promptly executed.

LONDON—SHOW ROOMS, 45 OXFORD STREET.

BIRMINGHAM—MANUFACTORY & SHOW ROOMS, BROAD STREET,

ESTABLISHED 1807.

Chandeliers in Bronze and Ormolu for Dining-room and Library.

Candelabra, Moderator Lamps, in Bronze, Ormolu, China, and Glass.

Statuettes in Parian, Vases, and other Ornaments, in a Show-Room erected expressly for these Articles.

OSLER, 45 OXFORD STREET, W.

THE PERFECT HAIR-DYE.

UNWIN AND ALBERT'S COLUMBIAN.



—Its extraordinary power is so effective and instantaneous that grey hair is coloured permanently a natural brown or black the moment it is touched by the dye, leaving it perfectly clean and soft as before the application. In cases at 5s. 6d., 10s. 6d., and 21s. Sample Case, 2s. 6d.; by post 40 stamps. 24 PICCADILLY, where Specimens may be seen.

Beware of Imitations.

AURICOMUS FLUID, for producing the rich golden flaxen colour so greatly admired for its beautiful and becoming shade, on ladies' and children's hair. Prepared only by UNWIN and ALBERT, Court Hairdressers, 24 Piccadilly. In bottles, 10s. 6d. and 21s.

SHEPPARD'S NEW MODEL DAIRY BUTTER,

Always good, in One Pound Baskets, 1s. 6d., basket included. Cheese, Hams, Bacon, Tongues, Chaps, &c., of the choicest descriptions. Crosse and Blackwell's Pickles, Sauces, and Breakfast and Luncheon Delicacies.

Provision Warehouses,
88 & 89 Borough, S.E.,
and Terminus Stores, London Bridge, S.E.

Bond's Permanent Marking Ink.

THE ORIGINAL INVENTION,
Established 1821, is by far the BEST for Marking NAMES and INITIALS upon household linen, wearing apparel, &c. Price 1s. per bottle. No sixpenny size ever made. Sold by E. R. BOND, 10, Bishopsgate St. Within, E.C., and by all respectable chemists and stationers in the United Kingdom.—NOTICE. Removed from 28, Long Lane, E.C. (where it has been established nearly half a century), to 10, Bishopsgate Street Within, E.C.



Cool and Refreshing Toilette Requisite.

OLDRIDGE'S BALM OF COLUMBIA, established upwards of forty years, is the best and only certain remedy ever discovered for Preserving, Strengthening, Beautifying, or Restoring the Hair, Whiskers, or Moustaches, and preventing them turning grey. Sold in bottles, 3s. 6d., 6s., and 11s., by C. and A. OLDRIDGE, 22, Wellington Street, Strand, London, W.C., and all Chemists and Perfumers. For Children's and Ladies' Hair it is most efficacious and unrivalled.



Used in the Palaces of

THE QUEEN

and the

PRINCE OF WALES

More cleanly, polishes more quickly, & cheaper.

Because it is less wasteful, and because a little goes further than any other kind. Sold by Grocers, Druggists, Ironmongers, &c. RECKITT and SOSS, Suffolk Lane, Upper Thames Street, E.C., and Hull.

White and Sound Teeth.

JEWSBURY and BROWN'S OR

MENTAL TOOTH PASTE. Established by 40 years' experience as the best preservative for the teeth gums. The original and only Genuine, 1s. 6d. and 2s. per pot.

113, MARKET STREET, MANCHESTER; and by Agents throughout the Kingdom and Colonies.

Kaye's Worsdell's Pills.

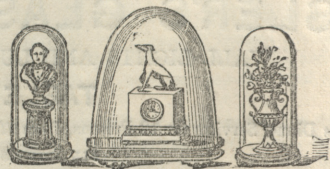
THE experience of nearly half a century proves that this invaluable Medicine is potent for the removal of DISEASE, and the restoration of HEALTH. No FAMILY should be without it, as a timely use of this great Remedy has saved THOUSANDS of valuable lives. There is no form of disease which it not be cured if Kaye's Worsdell's Pills are taken in time. Sold by all Chemists, &c., at 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. per box.

TRELOAR'S KAMPTULICON

Plain.....3s. 4d. per square yard.

Printed...3s. 9d. ditto.

67 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON



GLASS SHADES

For the Protection of Articles injured by exposure.

FERN CASES AND AQUARIUMS,

GLASS AND OTHER MATERIALS FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC PURPOSES,

AND EVERY KIND OF PLAIN AND ORNAMENTAL

WINDOW-GLASS,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL, AT

CLAUDET & HOUGHTON'S
89, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON

Lists of Prices sent Free on Application.



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

JOSEPH GILLOTT, METALLIC PEN MAKER TO THE QUEEN,

EGS to inform the Commercial World, Scholastic Institutions, and the Public generally, that, by a novel application of his unrivalled Machinery for making Steel Pens, he introduced a NEW SERIES of his useful productions, which, for EXCELLENCE OF TEMPER, QUALITY OF MATERIAL, and, above all, CHEAPNESS IN PRICE, must insure universal approbation, and defy competition. Each Pen bears the impress of his name as a guarantee of quality. They are put up in boxes containing gross each, with label outside, and the fac-simile of his signature.

At the request of numerous persons engaged in tuition, J. G. has introduced his WARRANTED SCHOOL PUBLIC PENS, which are especially adapted to their use, being of different degrees of flexibility, and fine, medium, and broad points, suitable for the various kinds of Writing taught in Schools.

Sold Retail by all Stationers and Booksellers. Merchants and Wholesale Dealers can be supplied at the Messrs. Graham-street, Birmingham; at 91 John-street, New York; and at 37 Gracechurch-street, London.

SLACK'S ELECTRO-PLATE

IS a coating of Pure Silver over Nickel. A combination of two Metals possessing such valuable properties renders it in appearance and wear equal to Sterling Silver.

MANUFACTURED SOLELY BY R. AND J. SLACK.

Cruet Frames, from 18s.; Corner Dishes, 8l. 8s. set, forming Eight Dishes; Tea and Coffee Sets from 4l. 10s.

Prices of Tea and Coffee Sets from 4s. to 10s.											King's				
	Electro Plated			Strong Plated			Thread		or Thread,						
	Fiddle Pattern.			Fiddle Pattern.			Pattern.		with Shell.						
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.			
Table Forks, per dozen	1	10	0	...	1	18	0	...	2	8	0	...	3	0	0
Dessert Forks	1	0	0	...	1	10	0	...	1	15	0	...	2	2	0
Table Spoons	1	10	0	...	1	18	0	...	2	8	0	...	3	0	0
Dessert Spoons	1	0	0	...	1	10	0	...	1	15	0	...	2	2	0
Tea Spoons	0	12	0	...	0	18	0	...	1	3	6	...	1	10	0

EVERY ARTICLE FOR THE TABLE AS IN SILVER.

OLD GOODS REPLATED EQUAL TO NEW.

SLACK'S TABLE CUTLERY

Has been celebrated 50 years for quality and cheapness

Our Catalogue of Drawings and Prices may be had gratis, or sent Post-free. Orders above 2l. sent carriage free, per rail, and packed without charge.

RICHARD AND JOHN SLACK,

IRONMONGERS TO HER MAJESTY,

336 STRAND, opposite SOMERSET HOUSE.

CUTLERY, Warranted. — The

most varied Assortment of TABLE CUTLERY in the world, all warranted, is on sale at WILLIAM S. BURTON'S, at prices that are remunerative only because of the largeness of the sales.

	Table Knives per doz.	Dessert Knives per doz.	Carvers per Pair.
IVORY HANDLES.			
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
3½-inch ivory handles . . .	12 0	9 6	4 6
3½-inch fine ivory handles . .	15 0	11 6	4 6
4-inch ivory balance handles .	18 0	14 0	5 0
4-inch fine ivory handles . .	25 0	19 0	7 6
4-inch finest African ivory handles	33 0	26 0	11 6
Ditto, with silver ferules . .	40 0	33 0	13 0
Ditto, carved handles, silver ferules	50 0	43 0	17 6
Nickel electro-silver han- dles, any pattern	25 0	19 0	7 6
Silver handles of any pattern	84 0	54 0	21 0
BONE AND HORN HANDLES.			
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Knives and Forks per dozen.	11 0	8 6	2 6
White bone handles	21 0	17 0	4 6
Ditto balance handles	17 0	14 0	4 0
Black horn rim'd shoulders .	12 0	9 0	3 0
Do., very strong riveted hds.			

The Largest Stock in existence of PLATED DESSERT KNIVES and FORKS, in Cases and otherwise, and of the new Plated Fish Carvers.

CLOCKS, CANDELABRA, BRONZES, and LAMPS.

WILLIAM S. BURTON invites inspection of his Stock of these, displayed in two large Show-rooms. Each article is of guaranteed quality, and some are objects of pure Vertu, the productions of the first manufacturers of Paris, from whom William S. Burton imports them direct.

Clocks, from	7s. 6d. to 45l.
Candelabra, from	13s. 6d. to 16l. 10s. per pair.
Bronzes, from	18s. to 16l. 16s.
Lamps, moderate, from 6s. to 9l.	
Pure Colza Oil	4s. 3d. per gallon.

FENDERS, STOVES, FIRE-

IRONS, and CHIMNEY-PIECES.—Buyers of the above are requested, before finally deciding, to visit WILLIAM S. BURTON'S SHOW-ROOMS. They contain such an assortment of FENDERS, STOVES, RANGES, CHIMNEY-PIECES, FIRE-IRONS, and GENERAL IRONMONGERY as cannot be approached elsewhere either for variety, novelty, beauty of design, or exquisiteness of workmanship. Bright stoves, with ornolu ornaments, 3l. 8s. to 33l. 10s.; bronzed fenders, with standards, 7s. to 5l. 12s.; steel fenders, 3l. 3s. to 11l.; ditto, with rich ornolu ornaments, from 3l. 3s. to 18l.; chimney-pieces, from 1l. 8s. to 100l.; fire-irons, from 3s. 3d. the set to 4l. 4s. The BURTON and all other PATENT STOVES, with radiating hearth-plates.

BEDSTEADS, BEDDING

FURNITURE.—WILLIAM S. BURTON on SHOW of IRON and BRASS BEDS CHILDREN'S COTS, stands unrivalled either for moderateness of prices. He also supplies manufactured on the premises, and Bed guaranteed quality.

Patent Iron Bedsteads, fitted with dovetail patent sacking, from 12s. each. Ornamented Brass Bedsteads in great variety, from 14l. 4s.

Complete suites of Bed-room Furniture, fancy woods, polished and japanned deal, &c. These are made by WILLIAM S. BURTON, manufacturer, 84, Newman Street, and everywhere guaranteed. China Toilet Ware in great variety, the set of five pieces.

THE PERFECT SUBSTITUTE

for SILVER.—The real NICKEL SILVER introduced more than thirty years ago by WILLIAM S. BURTON, when plated by the patent process of Elkington and Co., is beyond all comparison an article next to sterling silver that can be used, either usefully or ornamentally, as by test it can be distinguished from real silver.

A small useful set, guaranteed of first quality and durability, as follows:—

	Fiddle or Old Silver Pattern.	Bead Pattern.	Three Pattern.
	<i>£ s. d.</i>	<i>£ s. d.</i>	<i>£ s. d.</i>
12 Table Forks	1 13 0	2 0 0	2 4 0
12 Table Spoons	1 13 0	2 0 0	2 4 0
12 Dessert Forks	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 12 0
12 Dessert Spoons	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 12 0
12 Tea Spoons	16 0	1 0 0	1 2 0
6 Egg Spoons, gilt bowls . .	10 0	12 0	12 0
2 Sauce Ladles	6 0	8 0	8 0
1 Gravy Spoon	6 6	9 0	10 0
2 Salt Spoons, gilt bowls . .	3 4	4 0	4 0
1 Mustard Spoon, gilt bowl . .	1 8	2 0	2 0
1 Pair Sugar Tongs	2 6	3 6	3 6
1 Pair Fish Carvers	1 4 0	1 10 0	1 10 0
1 Butter Knife	2 6	4 0	4 0
1 Soup Ladle	10 0	12 0	10 0
1 Sugar Sifter	3 3	4 6	4 6
Total	9 19 9	12 9 0	13 9 0

Any article to be had singly at the same price as in the above, and a relation of prices, &c., 2l. 15s. Tea and Coffee Sets, and Corner Dishes, Cruet and Liqueur Frames, proportionate prices. All kinds of re-plating patent process.

TEA URNS, of LONDON

MAKE ONLY.—The largest Assortment made TEA URNS in the world (including a variety of novelties, many of which are registered) is at WILLIAM S. BURTON'S, from 30s. to 6l.

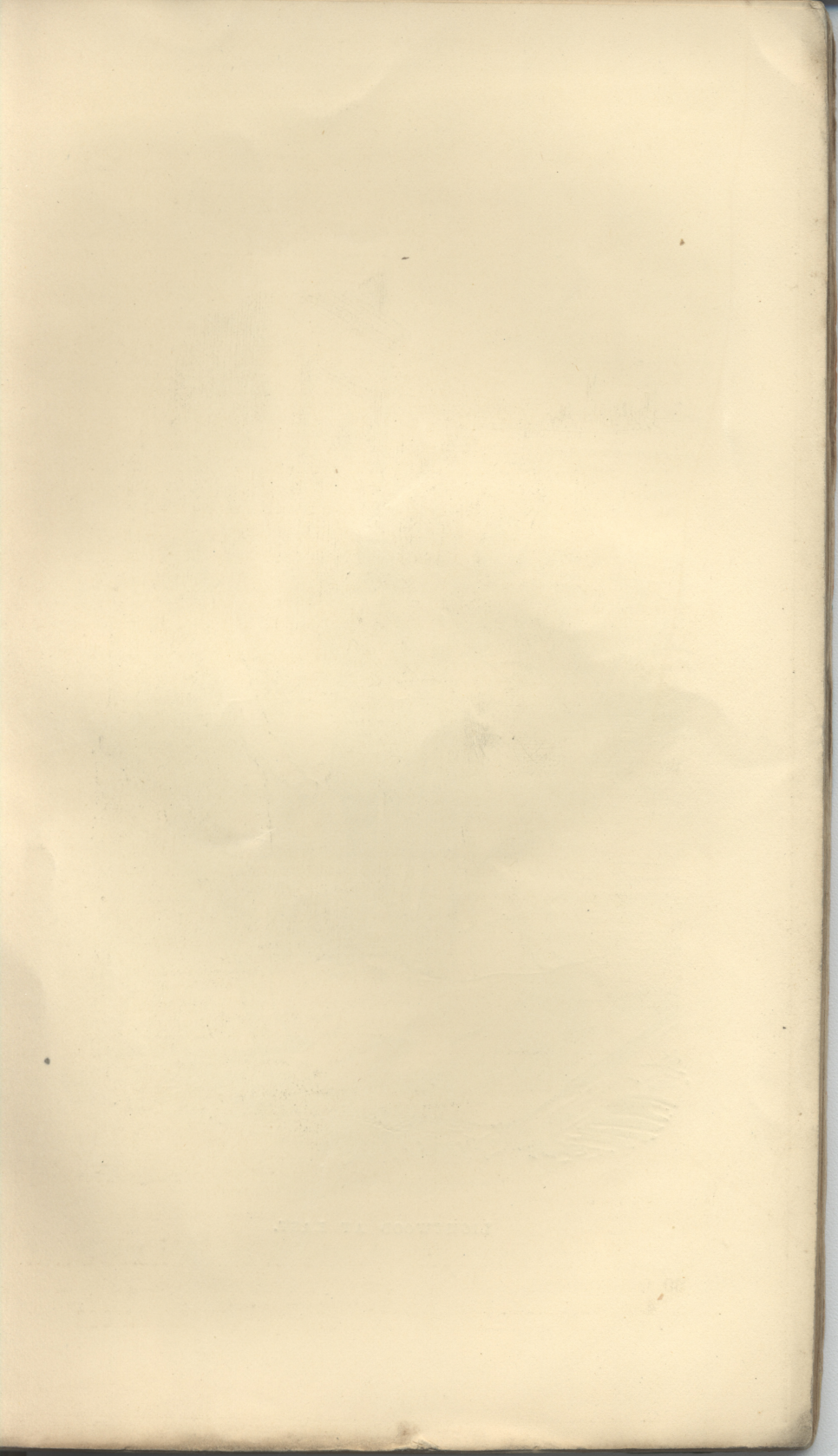
WILLIAM S. BURTON, GENERAL FURNISHING IRONMONGER

By Appointment to H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES,

Sends a **CATALOGUE** gratis and post paid. It contains upwards of 600 Illustrations of his Illuminated Sterling Silver and Electro Plate, Nickel Silver, and Britannia Metal Goods, Dish Covers, Hot-water Dishes, Fenders, Marble Chimney-pieces, Kitchen Ranges, Lamps, Gaseliers, Tea Trays, Urns and Kettles, Clocks, Toilet Baths, Toilet Ware, Turnery, Iron and Brass Bedsteads, Bedding, Bedroom Cabinet Furniture, &c., with LAMPS and PLANS of the TWENTY LARGE SHOW-ROOMS at

39 OXFORD STREET, W.; 1, 1a, 2, 3, & 4, NEWMAN STREET,
4, 5, & 6, PERRY'S PLACE; & 1 NEWMAN YARD, LONDON

ESTABLISHED 1820.

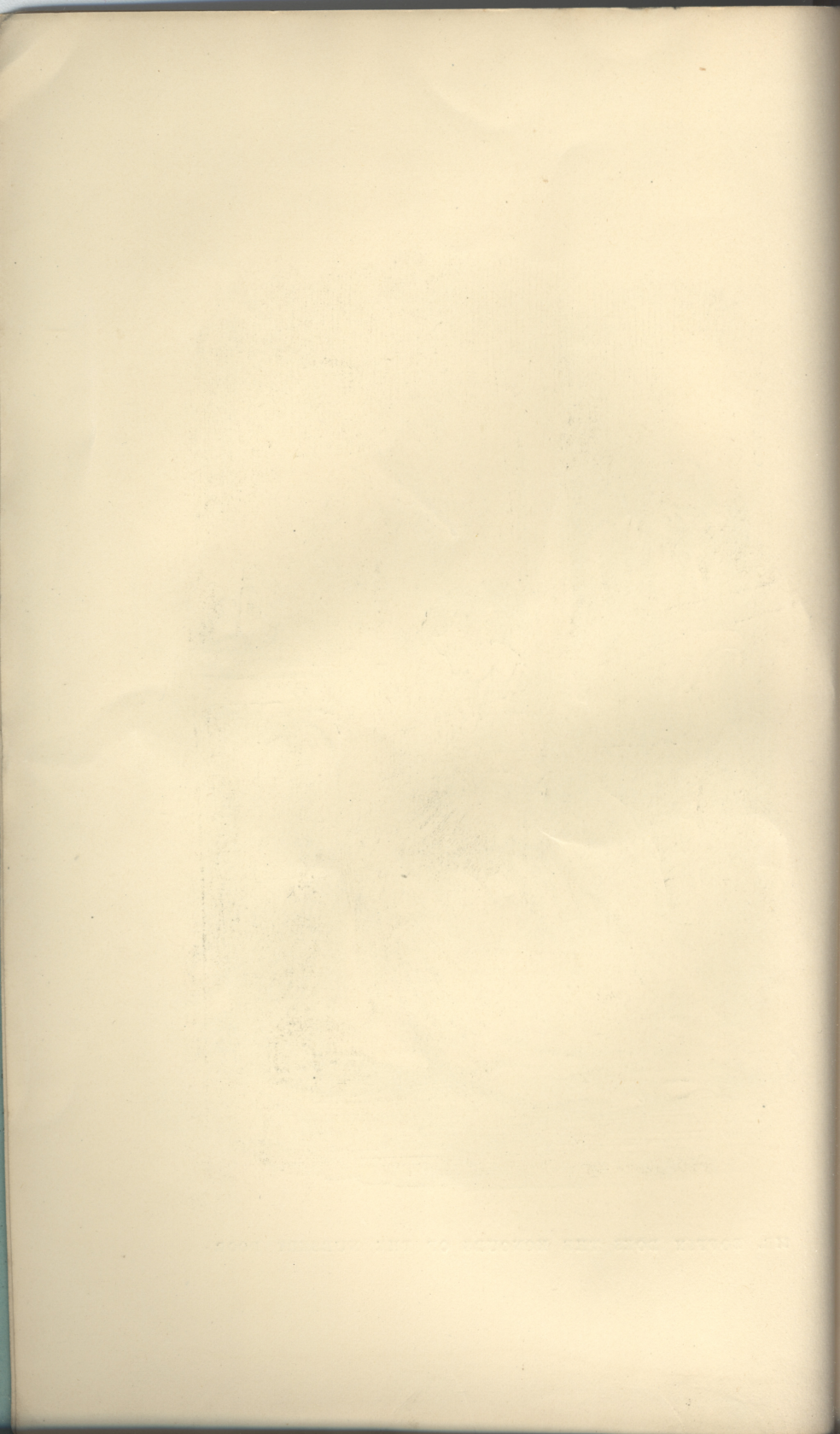


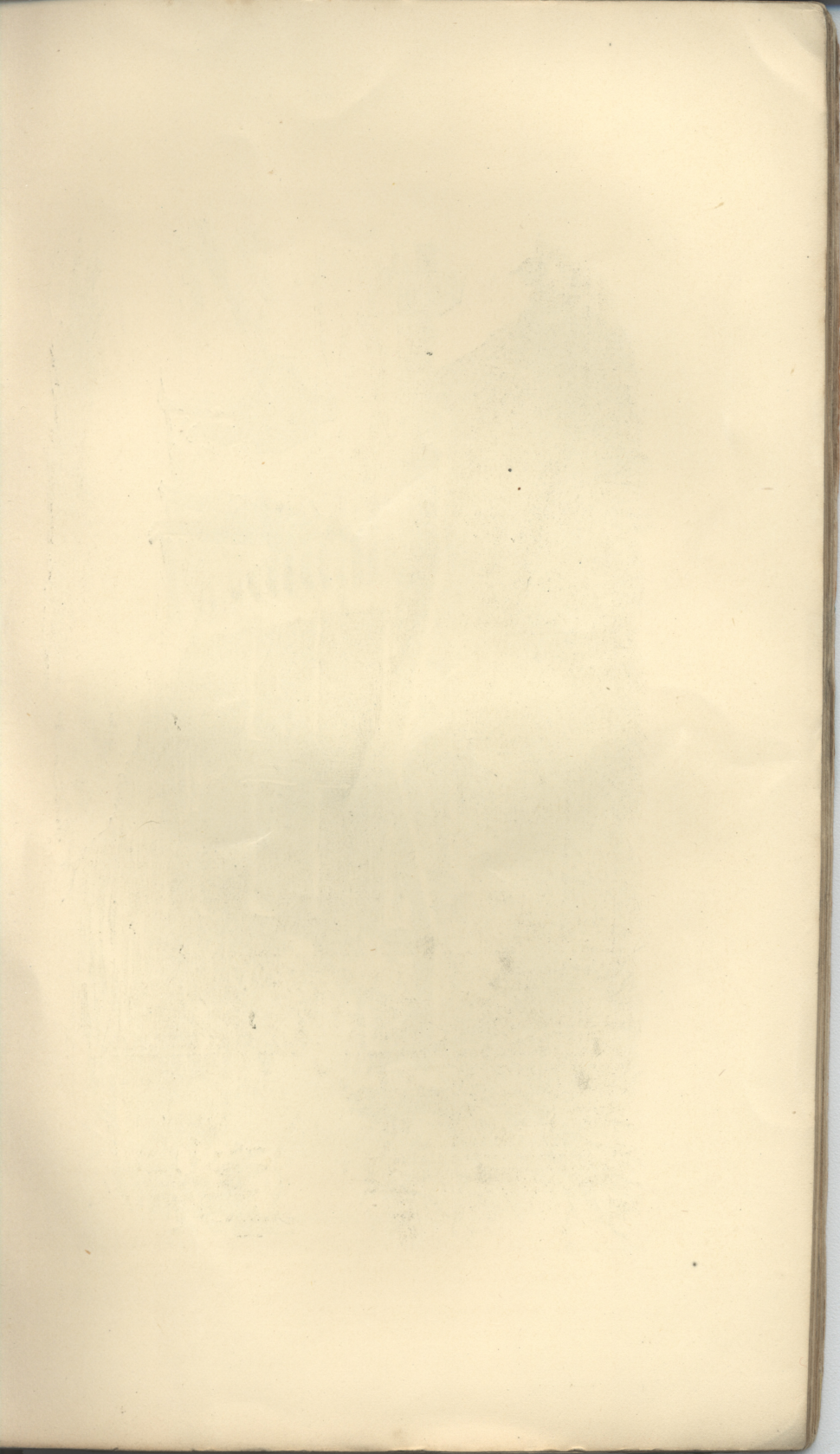


LIGHTWOOD AT LAST.



MR. BOFFIN DOES THE HONOURS OF THE NURSERY DOOR.







NOT TO BE SHAKEN OFF.



THE DUTCH BOTTLE.

Frontispiece.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PASSING SHADOW.

THE winds and tides rose and fell a certain number of times, the earth moved round the sun a certain number of times, the ship upon the ocean made her voyage safely, and brought a baby-Bella home. Then who so blest and happy as Mrs. John Rokesmith, saving and excepting Mr. John Rokesmith!

"Would you not like to be rich *now*, my darling?"

"How can you ask me such a question, John dear? Am I not rich?"

These were among the first words spoken near the baby Bella as she lay asleep. She soon proved to be a baby of wonderful intelligence, evincing the strongest objection to her grandmother's society, and being invariably seized with a painful acidity of the stomach when that dignified lady honoured her with any attention.

It was charming to see Bella contemplating this baby, and finding out her own dimples in that tiny reflection, as if she were looking in the glass without personal vanity. Her cherubic father justly remarked to her husband that the baby seemed to make her younger than before, reminding him of the days when she had a pet doll and used to talk to it as she carried it about. The world might have been challenged to produce another baby who had such a store of pleasant nonsense said and sung to it, as Bella said and sung to this baby; or who was dressed and undressed as often in four-and-twenty hours as Bella dressed and undressed this baby; or who was held behind doors and poked out to stop its father's way when he came home, as this baby was; or, in a word, who did half the number of baby things, through the lively invention of a gay and proud young mother, that this inexhaustible baby did.

The inexhaustible baby was two or three months old, when Bella began to notice a cloud upon her husband's brow. Watching it, she saw a gathering and deepening anxiety there, which caused her great disquiet. More than once, she awoke him muttering in his sleep; and, though he muttered nothing worse than her own name, it was plain to her that his restlessness originated in some load of care. Therefore, Bella at length put in her claim to divide this load, and bear her half of it.

"You know, John dear," she said, cheerily reverting to their former conversation, "that I hope I may safely be trusted in great things. And it surely cannot be a little thing that causes you so much uneasiness. It's very considerate of you to try to hide from me that you are uncomfortable about something, but it's quite impossible to be done, John love."

"I admit that I am rather uneasy, my own."

"Then please to tell me what about, sir."

But no, he evaded that. "Never mind!" thought Bella, resolutely.

"John requires me to put perfect faith in him, and he shall not be disappointed."

She went up to London one day, to meet him, in order that they might make some purchases. She found him waiting for her at her journey's end, and they walked away together through the streets. He was in gay spirits, though still harping on that notion of their being rich; and he said, now let them make believe that yonder fine carriage was theirs, and that it was waiting to take them home to a fine house they had; what would Bella, in that case, best like to find in the house? Well! Bella didn't know: already having everything she wanted, she couldn't say. But, by degrees she was led on to confess that she would like to have for the inexhaustible baby such a nursery as never was seen. It was to be "a very rainbow for colours," as she was quite sure baby noticed colours; and the staircase was to be adorned with the most exquisite flowers, as she was absolutely certain baby noticed flowers; and there was to be an aviary somewhere, of the loveliest little birds, as there was not the smallest doubt in the world that baby noticed birds. Was there nothing else? No, John dear. The predilections of the inexhaustible baby being provided for, Bella could think of nothing else.

They were chatting on in this way, and John had suggested, "No jewels for your own wear, for instance?" and Bella had replied laughing. O! if he came to that, yes, there might be a beautiful ivory case of jewels on her dressing-table; when these pictures were in a moment darkened and blotted out.

They turned a corner, and met Mr. Lightwood.

He stopped as if he were petrified by the sight of Bella's husband, who in the same moment had changed colour.

"Mr. Lightwood and I have met before," he said.

"Met before, John?" Bella repeated in a tone of wonder. "Mr. Lightwood told me he had never seen you."

"I did not then know that I had," said Lightwood, discomposed on her account. "I believed that I had only heard of—Mr. Rokesmith." With an emphasis on the name.

"When Mr. Lightwood saw me, my love," observed her husband, not avoiding his eye, but looking at him, "my name was Julius Handford."

Julius Handford! The name that Bella had so often seen in old newspapers, when she was an inmate of Mr. Boffin's house! Julius Handford, who had been publicly entreated to appear, and for intelligence of whom a reward had been publicly offered!

"I would have avoided mentioning it in your presence," said Lightwood to Bella, delicately; "but since your husband mentions it himself, I must confirm his strange admission. I saw him as Mr. Julius Handford, and I afterwards (unquestionably to his knowledge) took great pains to trace him out."

"Quite true. But it was not my object or my interest," said Rokesmith, quietly, "to be traced out."

Bella looked from the one to the other, in amazement.

"Mr. Lightwood," pursued her husband, "as chance has brought us face to face at last—which is not to be wondered at, for the

wonder is, that, in spite of all my pains to the contrary, chance has not confronted us together sooner—I have only to remind you that you have been at my house, and to add that I have not changed my residence.”

“Sir,” returned Lightwood, with a meaning glance towards Bella, “my position is a truly painful one. I hope that no complicity in a very dark transaction may attach to you, but you cannot fail to know that your own extraordinary conduct has laid you under suspicion.”

“I know it has,” was all the reply.

“My professional duty,” said Lightwood hesitating, with another glance towards Bella, “is greatly at variance with my personal inclination; but I doubt, Mr. Handford, or Mr. Rokesmith, whether I am justified in taking leave of you here, with your whole course unexplained.”

Bella caught her husband by the hand.

“Don’t be alarmed, my darling. Mr. Lightwood will find that he is quite justified in taking leave of me here. At all events,” added Rokesmith, “he will find that I mean to take leave of him here.”

“I think, sir,” said Lightwood, “you can scarcely deny that when I came to your house on the occasion to which you have referred, you avoided me of a set purpose.”

“Mr. Lightwood, I assure you I have no disposition to deny it, or intention to deny it. I should have continued to avoid you, in pursuance of the same set purpose, for a short time longer, if we had not met now. I am going straight home, and shall remain at home to-morrow until noon. Hereafter, I hope we may be better acquainted. Good-day.”

Lightwood stood irresolute, but Bella’s husband passed him in the steadiest manner, with Bella on his arm; and they went home without encountering any further remonstrance or molestation from any one.

When they had dined and were alone, John Rokesmith said to his wife, who had preserved her cheerfulness: “And you don’t ask me, my dear, why I bore that name?”

“No, John love. I should dearly like to know, of course;” (which her anxious face confirmed;) “but I wait until you can tell me of your own free will. You asked me if I could have perfect faith in you, and I said yes, and I meant it.”

It did not escape Bella’s notice that he began to look triumphant. She wanted no strengthening in her firmness; but if she had had need of any, she would have derived it from his kindling face.

“You cannot have been prepared, my dearest, for such a discovery as that this mysterious Mr. Handford was identical with your husband?”

“No, John dear, of course not. But you told me to prepare to be tried, and I prepared myself.”

He drew her to nestle closer to him, and told her it would soon be over, and the truth would soon appear. “And now,” he went on. “lay stress, my dear, on these words that I am going to add. I

stand in no kind of peril, and I can by possibility be hurt at no one's hand."

"You are quite, quite sure of that, John dear?"

"Not a hair of my head! Moreover, I have done no wrong, and have injured no man. Shall I swear it?"

"No, John!" cried Bella, laying her hand upon his lips, with a proud look. "Never to me!"

"But circumstances," he went on "—I can, and I will, disperse them in a moment—have surrounded me with one of the strangest suspicions ever known. You heard Mr. Lightwood speak of a dark transaction?"

"Yes, John."

"You are prepared to hear explicitly what he meant?"

"Yes, John."

"My life, he meant the murder of John Harmon, your allotted husband."

With a fast palpitating heart, Bella grasped him by the arm.

"You cannot be suspected, John?"

"Dear love, I can be—for I am!"

There was silence between them, as she sat looking in his face, with the colour quite gone from her own face and lips. "How dare they!" she cried at length, in a burst of generous indignation. "My beloved husband, how dare they!"

He caught her in his arms as she opened hers, and held her to his heart. "Even knowing this, you can trust me, Bella?"

"I can trust you, John dear, with all my soul. If I could not trust you, I should fall dead at your feet."

The kindling triumph in his face was bright indeed, as he looked up and rapturously exclaimed, what had he done to deserve the blessing of this dear confiding creature's heart! Again she put her hand upon his lips, saying, "Hush!" and then told him, in her own little natural pathetic way, that if all the world were against him, she would be for him; that if all the world repudiated him, she would believe him; that if he were infamous in other eyes, he would be honored in hers; and that, under the worst unmerited suspicion, she could devote her life to consoling him, and imparting her own faith in him to their little child.

A twilight calm of happiness then succeeding to their radiant noon, they remained at peace, until a strange voice in the room startled them both. The room being by that time dark, the voice said, "Don't let the lady be alarmed by my striking a light," and immediately a match rattled, and glimmered in a hand. The hand and the match and the voice were then seen by John Rokesmith to belong to Mr. Inspector, once meditatively active in this chronicle.

"I take the liberty," said Mr. Inspector, in a business-like manner, "to bring myself to the recollection of Mr. Julius Handford, who gave me his name and address down at our place a considerable time ago. Would the lady object to my lighting the pair of candles on the chimneypiece, to throw a further light upon the subject? No? Thank you, ma'am. Now, we look cheerful."

Mr. Inspector, in a dark-blue buttoned-up frock coat and panta-

loons, presented a serviceable, half-pay, Royal Arms kind of appearance, as he applied his pocket handkerchief to his nose and bowed to the lady.

"You favoured me, Mr. Handford," said Mr. Inspector, "by writing down your name and address, and I produce the piece of paper on which you wrote it. Comparing the same with the writing on the fly-leaf of this book on the table—and a sweet pretty volume it is—I find the writing of the entry, 'Mrs. John Rokesmith. From her husband on her birthday'—and very gratifying to the feelings such memorials are—to correspond exactly. Can I have a word with you?"

"Certainly. Here, if you please," was the reply.

"Why," retorted Mr. Inspector, again using his pocket handkerchief, "though there's nothing for the lady to be at all alarmed at, still, ladies are apt to take alarm at matters of business—being of that fragile sex that they're not accustomed to them when not of a strictly domestic character—and I do generally make it a rule to propose retirement from the presence of ladies, before entering upon business topics. Or perhaps," Mr. Inspector hinted, "if the lady was to step up-stairs, and take a look at baby now!"

"Mrs. Rokesmith,"—her husband was beginning; when Mr. Inspector, regarding the words as an introduction, said, "Happy, I am sure, to have the honor." And bowed, with gallantry.

"Mrs. Rokesmith," resumed her husband, "is satisfied that she can have no reason for being alarmed, whatever the business is."

"Really? Is that so?" said Mr. Inspector. "But it's a sex to live and learn from, and there's nothing a lady can't accomplish when she once fully gives her mind to it. It's the case with my own wife. Well, ma'am, this good gentleman of yours has given rise to a rather large amount of trouble which might have been avoided if he had come forward and explained himself. Well you see! He *didn't* come forward and explain himself. Consequently, now that we meet, him and me, you'll say—and say right—that there's nothing to be alarmed at, in my proposing to him to come forward—or, putting the same meaning in another form, to come along with me—and explain himself."

When Mr. Inspector put it in that other form, "to come along with me," there was a relishing roll in his voice, and his eye beamed with an official lustre.

"Do you propose to take me into custody?" inquired John Rokesmith, very coolly.

"Why argue?" returned Mr. Inspector in a comfortable sort of remonstrance; "ain't it enough that I propose that you shall come along with me?"

"For what reason?"

"Lord bless my soul and body!" returned Mr. Inspector, "I wonder at it in a man of your education. Why argue?"

"What do you charge against me?"

"I wonder at you before a lady," said Mr. Inspector, shaking his head reproachfully: "I wonder, brought up as you have been, you haven't a more delicate mind! I charge you, then, with being some way

concerned in the Harmon Murder. I don't say whether before, or in, or after, the fact. I don't say whether with having some knowledge of it that hasn't come out."

"You don't surprise me. I foresaw your visit this afternoon."

"Don't!" said Mr. Inspector. "Why, why argue? It's my duty to inform you that whatever you say, will be used against you."

"I don't think it will."

"But I tell you it will," said Mr. Inspector. "Now, having received the caution, do you still say that you foresaw my visit this afternoon?"

"Yes. And I will say something more, if you will step with me into the next room."

With a reassuring kiss on the lips of the frightened Bella, her husband (to whom Mr. Inspector obligingly offered his arm), took up a candle, and withdrew with that gentleman. They were a full half-hour in conference. When they returned, Mr. Inspector looked considerably astonished.

"I have invited this worthy officer, my dear," said John, "to make a short excursion with me in which you shall be a sharer. He will take something to eat and drink, I dare say, on your invitation, while you are getting your bonnet on."

Mr. Inspector declined eating, but assented to the proposal of a glass of brandy and water. Mixing this cold, and pensively consuming it, he broke at intervals into such soliloquies as that he never did know such a move, that he never had been so gravelled, and that what a game was this to try the sort of stuff a man's opinion of himself was made of! Concurrently with these comments, he more than once burst out a laughing, with the half-enjoying and half-piqued air of a man, who had given up a good conundrum, after much guessing, and been told the answer. Bella was so timid of him, that she noted these things in a half-shrinking, half-perceptive way, and similarly noted that there was a great change in his manner towards John. That coming-along-with-him deportment was now lost in long musing looks at John and at herself, and sometimes in slow heavy rubs of his hand across his forehead, as if he were ironing out the creases which his deep pondering made there. He had had some coughing and whistling satellites secretly gravitating towards him about the premises, but they were now dismissed, and he eyed John as if he had meant to do him a public service, but had unfortunately been anticipated. Whether Bella might have noted anything more, if she had been less afraid of him, she could not determine; but it was all inexplicable to her, and not the faintest flash of the real state of the case broke in upon her mind. Mr. Inspector's increased notice of herself, and knowing way of raising his eyebrows when their eyes by any chance met, as if he put the question "Don't you see?" augmented her timidity, and, consequently, her perplexity. For all these reasons, when he and she and John, at towards nine o'clock of a winter evening went to London, and began driving from London Bridge, among low-lying water-side wharves and docks and strange places, Bella was in the state of a dreamer; perfectly unable to account for her being there, perfectly unable to forecast what would happen next, or whither she was

going, or why; certain of nothing in the immediate present, but that she confided in John, and that John seemed somehow to be getting more triumphant. But what a certainty was that!

They alighted at last at the corner of a court, where there was a building with a bright lamp and a wicket gate. Its orderly appearance was very unlike that of the surrounding neighbourhood, and was explained by the inscription POLICE STATION.

"We are not going in here, John?" said Bella, clinging to him.

"Yes, my dear; but of our own accord. We shall come out again as easily, never fear."

The whitewashed room was pure white as of old, the methodical book-keeping was in peaceful progress as of old, and some distant howler was banging against a cell door as of old. The sanctuary was not a permanent abiding-place, but a kind of criminal Pickford's. The lower passions and vices were regularly ticked off in the books, warehoused in the cells, carted away as per accompanying invoice, and left little mark upon it.

Mr. Inspector placed two chairs for his visitors, before the fire, and communed in a low voice with a brother of his order (also of a half-pay, and Royal Arms aspect), who, judged only by his occupation at the moment, might have been a writing-master, setting copies. Their conference done, Mr. Inspector returned to the fireplace, and, having observed that he would step round to the Fellowships and see how matters stood, went out. He soon came back again, saying, "Nothing could be better, for they're at supper with Miss Abbey in the bar;" and then they all three went out together.

Still, as in a dream, Bella found herself entering a snug old-fashioned public-house, and found herself smuggled into a little three-cornered room nearly opposite the bar of that establishment. Mr. Inspector achieved the smuggling of herself and John into this queer room, called Cosy in an inscription on the door, by entering in the narrow passage first in order, and suddenly turning round upon them with extended arms, as if they had been two sheep. The room was lighted for their reception.

"Now," said Mr. Inspector to John, turning the gas lower; "I'll mix with 'em in a casual way, and when I say Identification, perhaps you'll show yourself."

John nodded, and Mr. Inspector went alone to the half-door of the bar. From the dim doorway of Cosy, within which Bella and her husband stood, they could see a comfortable little party of three persons sitting at supper in the bar, and could hear everything that was said.

The three persons were Miss Abbey and two male guests. To whom collectively, Mr. Inspector remarked that the weather was getting sharp for the time of year.

"It need be sharp to suit your wits, sir," said Miss Abbey. "What have you got in hand now?"

"Thanking you for your compliment: not much, Miss Abbey," was Mr. Inspector's rejoinder.

"Who have you got in Cosy?" asked Miss Abbey.

"Only a gentleman and his wife, Miss."

"And who are they? If one may ask it without detriment to

your deep plans in the interests of the honest public?" said Miss Abbey, proud of Mr. Inspector as an administrative genius.

"They are strangers in this part of the town, Miss Abbey. They are waiting till I shall want the gentleman to show himself somewhere, for half a moment."

"While they're waiting," said Miss Abbey, "couldn't you join us?"

Mr. Inspector immediately slipped into the bar, and sat down at the side of the half-door, with his back towards the passage, and directly facing the two guests. "I don't take my supper till later in the night," said he, "and therefore I won't disturb the compactness of the table. But I'll take a glass of flip, if that's flip in the jug in the fender."

"That's flip," replied Miss Abbey, "and it's my making, and if even you can find out better, I shall be glad to know where." Filling him, with hospitable hands, a steaming tumbler, Miss Abbey replaced the jug by the fire; the company not having yet arrived at the flip-stage of their supper, but being as yet skirmishing with strong ale.

"Ah—h!" cried Mr. Inspector. "That's the smack! There's not a Detective in the Force, Miss Abbey, that could find out better stuff than that."

"Glad to hear you say so," rejoined Miss Abbey. "You ought to know, if anybody does."

"Mr. Job Potterson," Mr. Inspector continued, "I drink your health. Mr. Jacob Kibble, I drink yours. Hope you have made a prosperous voyage home, gentlemen both."

Mr. Kibble, an unctuous broad man of few words and many mouthfuls, said, more briefly than pointedly, raising his ale to his lips: "Same to you." Mr. Job Potterson, a semi-seafaring man of obliging demeanour, said, "Thank you, sir."

"Lord bless my soul and body!" cried Mr. Inspector. "Talk of trades, Miss Abbey, and the way they set their marks on men" (a subject which nobody had approached); "who wouldn't know your brother to be a Steward! There's a bright and ready twinkle in his eye, there's a neatness in his action, there's a smartness in his figure, there's an air of reliability about him in case you wanted a basin, which points out the steward! And Mr. Kibble; ain't he Passenger, all over? While there's that mercantile cut upon him which would make you happy to give him credit for five hundred pound, don't you see the salt sea shining on him too?"

"You do, I dare say," returned Miss Abbey, "but I don't. And as for stewarding, I think it's time my brother gave that up, and took this House in hand on his sister's retiring. The House will go to pieces if he don't. I wouldn't sell it for any money that could be told out, to a person that I couldn't depend upon to be a Law to the Porters, as I have been."

"There you're right, Miss," said Mr. Inspector. "A better kept house is not known to our men. What do I say? Half so well a kept house is not known to our men. Show the Force the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, and the Force—to a constable—will show you a piece of perfection, Mr. Kibble."

That gentleman, with a very serious shake of his head, subscribed the article.

"And talk of Time slipping by you, as if it was an animal at rustic sports with its tail soaped," said Mr. Inspector (again, a subject which nobody had approached); "why, well you may. Well you may. How has it slipped by us, since the time when Mr. Job Potterson here present, Mr. Jacob Kibble here present, and an Officer of the Force here present, first came together on a matter of Identification!"

Bella's husband stepped softly to the half-door of the bar, and stood there.

"How has Time slipped by us," Mr. Inspector went on slowly, with his eyes narrowly observant of the two guests, "since we three very men, at an Inquest in this very house—Mr. Kibble? Taken ill, sir?"

Mr. Kibble had staggered up, with his lower jaw dropped, catching Potterson by the shoulder, and pointing to the half-door. He now cried out: "Potterson! Look! Look there!" Potterson started up, started back, and exclaimed: "Heaven defend us, what's that!" Bella's husband stepped back to Bella, took her in his arms (for she was terrified by the unintelligible terror of the two men), and shut the door of the little room. A hurry of voices succeeded, in which Mr. Inspector's voice was busiest; it gradually slackened and sank; and Mr. Inspector reappeared. "Sharp's the word, sir!" he said, looking in with a knowing wink. "We'll get your lady out at once." Immediately, Bella and her husband were under the stars, making their way back, alone, to the vehicle they had kept in waiting.

All this was most extraordinary, and Bella could make nothing of it but that John was in the right. How in the right, and how suspected of being in the wrong, she could not divine. Some vague idea that he had never really assumed the name of Handford, and that there was a remarkable likeness between him and that mysterious person, was her nearest approach to any definite explanation. But John was triumphant; that much was made apparent; and she could wait for the rest.

When John came home to dinner next day, he said, sitting down on the sofa by Bella and baby-Bella: "My dear, I have a piece of news to tell you. I have left the China House."

As he seemed to like having left it, Bella took it for granted that there was no misfortune in the case.

"In a word, my love," said John, "the China House is broken up and abolished. There is no such thing any more."

"Then, are you already in another House, John?"

"Yes, my darling. I am in another way of business. And I am rather better off."

The inexhaustible baby was instantly made to congratulate him, and to say, with appropriate action on the part of a very limp arm and a speckled fist: "Three cheers, ladies and gempemorums. Hoo—ray!"

"I am afraid, my life," said John, "that you have become very much attached to this cottage?"

"Afraid I have, John? Of course I have."

"The reason why I said afraid," returned John, "is, because we must move."

"O John!"

"Yes, my dear, we must move. We must have our head-quarters in London now. In short, there's a dwelling-house rent-free, attached to my new position, and we must occupy it."

"That's a gain, John."

"Yes, my dear, it is undoubtedly a gain."

He gave her a very blithe look, and a very sly look. Which occasioned the inexhaustible baby to square at him with the speckled fists, and demand in a threatening manner what he meant?

"My love, you said it was a gain, and I said it was a gain. A very innocent remark, surely."

"I won't," said the inexhaustible baby, "—allow—you—to make—game—of—my—venerable—Ma." At each division administering a soft facer with one of the speckled fists.

John having stooped down to receive these punishing visitations, Bella asked him, would it be necessary to move soon? Why yes, indeed (said John), he did propose that they should move very soon. Taking the furniture with them, of course? (said Bella). Why, no (said John), the fact was, that the house was—in a sort of a kind of a way—furnished already.

The inexhaustible baby, hearing this, resumed the offensive, and said: "But there's no nursery for me, sir. What do you mean, marble-hearted parent?" To which the marble-hearted parent rejoined that there was a—sort of a kind of a—nursery, and it might be "made to do." "Made to do?" returned the Inexhaustible, administering more punishment, "what do you take me for?" And was then turned over on its back in Bella's lap, and smothered with kisses.

"But really, John dear," said Bella, flushed in quite a lovely manner by these exercises, "will the new house, just as it stands, do for baby? That's the question."

"I felt that to be the question," he returned, "and therefore I arranged that you should come with me and look at it, to-morrow morning." Appointment made, accordingly, for Bella to go up with him to-morrow morning; John kissed; and Bella delighted.

When they reached London in pursuance of their little plan, they took coach and drove westward. Not only drove westward, but drove into that particular westward division, which Bella had seen last when she turned her face from Mr. Boffin's door. Not only drove into that particular division, but drove at last into that very street. Not only drove into that very street, but stopped at last at that very house.

"John dear!" cried Bella, looking out of window in a flutter. "Do you see where we are?"

"Yes, my love. The coachman's quite right."

The house-door was opened without any knocking or ringing, and John promptly helped her out. The servant who stood holding the door, asked no question of John, neither did he go before them or follow them as they went straight up-stairs. It was only her husband's encircling arm, urging her on, that prevented Bella from stopping at the foot of the staircase. As they as-

cended, it was seen to be tastefully ornamented with most beautiful flowers.

"O John!" said Bella, faintly. "What does this mean?"

"Nothing, my darling, nothing. Let us go on."

Going on a little higher, they came to a charming aviary, in which a number of tropical birds, more gorgeous in colour than the flowers, were flying about; and among those birds were gold and silver fish, and mosses, and water-lilies, and a fountain, and all manner of wonders.

"O my dear John!" said Bella. "What does this mean?"

"Nothing, my darling, nothing. Let us go on."

They went on, until they came to a door. As John put out his hand to open it, Bella caught his hand.

"I don't know what it means, but it's too much for me. Hold me, John, love."

John caught her up in his arm, and lightly dashed into the room with her.

Behold Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, beaming! Behold Mrs. Boffin clapping her hands in an ecstasy, running to Bella with tears of joy pouring down her comely face, and folding her to her breast, with the words: "My deary deary, deary girl, that Noddy and me saw married and couldn't wish joy to, or so much as speak to! My deary, deary, deary, wife of John and mother of his little child! My loving loving, bright bright, Pretty Pretty! Welcome to your house and home, my deary!"

CHAPTER XIII.

SHOWING HOW THE GOLDEN DUSTMAN HELPED TO SCATTER DUST.

In all the first bewilderment of her wonder, the most bewilderingly wonderful thing to Bella was the shining countenance of Mr. Boffin. That his wife should be joyous, open-hearted, and genial, or that her face should express every quality that was large and trusting, and no quality that was little or mean, was accordant with Bella's experience. But, that he, with a perfectly beneficent air and a plump rosy face, should be standing there, looking at her and John, like some jovial good spirit, was marvellous. For, how had he looked when she last saw him in that very room (it was the room in which she had given him that piece of her mind at parting), and what had become of all those crooked lines of suspicion, avarice, and distrust, that twisted his visage then?

Mrs. Boffin seated Bella on the large ottoman, and seated herself beside her, and John her husband seated himself on the other side of her, and Mr. Boffin stood beaming at every one and everything he could see, with surpassing jollity and enjoyment. Mrs. Boffin was then taken with a laughing fit of clapping her hands, and clapping her knees, and rocking herself to and fro, and then with another laughing fit of embracing Bella, and rocking her to and fro—both fits, of considerable duration.

"Old lady, old lady," said Mr. Boffin, at length; "if you don't begin somebody else must."

"I'm a going to begin, Noddy, my dear," returned Mrs. Boffin. "Only it isn't easy for a person to know where to begin, when a person is in this state of delight and happiness. Bella, my dear. Tell me, who's this?"

"Who is this?" repeated Bella. "My husband."

"Ah! But tell me his name, deary!" cried Mrs. Boffin.

"Rokesmith."

"No, it ain't!" cried Mrs. Boffin, clapping her hands, and shaking her head. "Not a bit of it."

"Handford then," suggested Bella.

"No, it ain't!" cried Mrs. Boffin, again clapping her hands and shaking her head. "Not a bit of it."

"At least, his name is John, I suppose?" said Bella.

"Ah! I should think so, deary!" cried Mrs. Boffin. "I should hope so! Many and many is the time I have called him by his name of John. But what's his other name, his true other name? Give a guess, my pretty!"

"I can't guess," said Bella, turning her pale face from one to another.

"I could," cried Mrs. Boffin, "and what's more, I did! I found him out, all in a flash as I may say, one night. Didn't I, Noddy?"

"Ay! That the old lady did!" said Mr. Boffin, with stout pride in the circumstance.

"Harkee to me, deary," pursued Mrs. Boffin, taking Bella's hands between her own, and gently beating on them from time to time. "It was after a particular night when John had been disappointed—as he thought—in his affections. It was after a night when John had made an offer to a certain young lady, and the certain young lady had refused it. It was after a particular night, when he felt himself cast-away-like, and had made up his mind to go seek his fortune. It was the very next night. My Noddy wanted a paper out of his Secretary's room, and I says to Noddy, 'I am going by the door, and I'll ask him for it.' I tapped at his door, and he didn't hear me. I looked in, and saw him a sitting lonely by his fire, brooding over it. He chanced to look up with a pleased kind of smile in my company when he saw me, and then in a single moment every grain of the gunpowder that had been lying sprinkled thick about him ever since I first set eyes upon him as a man at the Bower, took fire! Too many a time had I seen him sitting lonely, when he was a poor child, to be pitied, heart and hand! Too many a time had I seen him in need of being brightened up with a comforting word! Too many and too many a time to be mistaken, when that glimpse of him come at last! No, no! I just makes out to cry, 'I know you now! You're John!' And he catches me as I drops.—So what," said Mrs. Boffin, breaking off in the rush of her speech to smile most radiantly, "might you think by this time that your husband's name was, dear?"

"Not," returned Bella, with quivering lips; "not Harmon? That's not possible?"

"Don't tremble. Why not possible, deary, when so many things are possible?" demanded Mrs. Boffin, in a soothing tone.

"He was killed," gasped Bella.

"Thought to be," said Mrs. Boffin. "But if ever John Harmon drew the breath of life on earth, that is certainly John Harmon's arm round your waist now, my pretty. If ever John Harmon had a wife on earth, that wife is certainly you. If ever John Harmon and his wife had a child on earth, that child is certainly this."

By a master-stroke of secret arrangement, the inexhaustible baby here appeared at the door, suspended in mid-air by invisible agency. Mrs. Boffin, plunging at it, brought it to Bella's lap, where both Mrs. and Mr. Boffin (as the saying is) "took it out of" the Inexhaustible in a shower of caresses. It was only this timely appearance that kept Bella from swooning. This, and her husband's earnestness in explaining further to her how it had come to pass that he had been supposed to be slain, and had even been suspected of his own murder; also, how he had put a pious fraud upon her which had preyed upon his mind, as the time for its disclosure approached, lest she might not make full allowance for the object with which it had originated, and in which it had fully developed.

"But bless ye, my beauty!" cried Mrs. Boffin, taking him up short at this point, with another hearty clap of her hands. "It wasn't John only that was in it. We was all of us in it."

"I don't," said Bella, looking vacantly from one to another, "yet understand—"

"Of course you don't, my deary," exclaimed Mrs. Boffin. "How can you till you're told! So now I am a going to tell you. So you put your two hands between my two hands again," cried the comfortable creature, embracing her, "with that blessed little picter lying on your lap, and you shall be told all the story. Now, I'm a going to tell the story. Once, twice, three times, and the horses is off. Here they go! When I cries out that night, 'I know you now, you're John!'—which was my exact words; wasn't they, John?"

"Your exact words," said John, laying his hand on hers.

"That's a very good arrangement," cried Mrs. Boffin. "Keep it there, John. And as we was all of us in it, Noddy you come and lay yours a top of his, and we won't break the pile till the story's done."

Mr. Boffin hitched up a chair, and added his broad brown right hand to the heap.

"That's capital!" said Mrs. Boffin, giving it a kiss. "Seems quite a family building; don't it? But the horses is off. Well! When I cries out that night, 'I know you now! you're John!' John catches of me, it is true; but I ain't a light weight, bless ye, and he's forced to let me down. Noddy, he hears a noise, and in he trots, and as soon as I anyways comes to myself I calls to him, 'Noddy, well I might say as I did say, that night at the Bower, for the Lord be thankful this is John!' On which he gives a heave, and down he goes likewise, with his head under the writing-table. This brings me round comfortable, and that brings him round comfortable, and then John and him and me we all fall a crying for joy."

"Yes! They cry for joy, my darling," her husband struck in. "You

understand? These two, whom I come to life to disappoint and dispossess, cry for joy!"

Bella looked at him confusedly, and looked again at Mrs. Boffin's radiant face.

"That's right, my dear, don't you mind him," said Mrs. Boffin, "stick to me. Well! Then we sits down, gradually gets cool, and holds a confabulation. John, he tells us how he is despairing in his mind on accounts of a certain fair young person, and how, if I hadn't found him out, he was going away to seek his fortune far and wide, and had fully meant never to come to life, but to leave the property as our wrongful inheritance for ever and a day. At which you never see a man so frightened as my Noddy was. For to think that he should have come into the property wrongful, however innocent, and—more than that—might have gone on keeping it to his dying day, turned him whiter than chalk."

"And you too," said Mr. Boffin.

"Don't you mind him, neither, my deary," resumed Mrs. Boffin; "stick to me. This brings up a confabulation regarding the certain fair young person; when Noddy he gives it as his opinion that she is a deary creetur. 'She may be a leetle spoilt, and nat'rally spoilt,' he says, 'by circumstances, but that's only on the surface, and I lay my life,' he says, 'that she's the true golden gold at heart.'"

"So did you," said Mr. Boffin.

"Don't you mind him a single morsel, my dear," proceeded Mrs. Boffin, "but stick to me. Then says John, O, if he could but prove so! Then we both of us ups and says, that minute, 'Prove so!'"

With a start, Bella directed a hurried glance towards Mr. Boffin. But, he was sitting thoughtfully smiling at that broad brown hand of his, and either didn't see it, or would take no notice of it.

"'Prove it, John!' we says," repeated Mrs. Boffin. "'Prove it and overcome your doubts with triumph, and be happy for the first time in your life, and for the rest of your life.' This puts John in a state, to be sure. Then we says, 'What will content you? If she was to stand up for you when you was slighted, if she was to show herself of a generous mind when you was oppressed, if she was to be truest to you when you was poorest and friendliest, and all this against her own seeming interest, how would that do?' 'Do?' says John, 'it would raise me to the skies.' 'Then,' says my Noddy, 'make your preparations for the ascent, John, it being my firm belief that up you go!'"

Bella caught Mr. Boffin's twinkling eye for half an instant; but he got it away from her, and restored it to his broad brown hand.

"From the first, you was always a special favourite of Noddy's," said Mrs. Boffin, shaking her head. "O you were! And if I had been inclined to be jealous, I don't know what I mightn't have done to you. But as I wasn't—why, my beauty," with a hearty laugh and an embrace, "I made you a special favourite of my own too. But the horses is coming round the corner. Well! Then says my Noddy, shaking his sides till he was fit to make 'em ache again: 'Look out for being slighted and oppressed, John, for if ever a man had a hard master, you shall find me from this present time to be such to you.' And then he began!" cried Mrs. Boffin, in an ecstasy

of admiration. "Lord bless you, then he began! And how he *did* begin; didn't he!"

Bella looked half frightened, and yet half laughed.

"But, bless you," pursued Mrs. Boffin, "if you could have seen him of a night, at that time of it! The way he'd sit and chuckle over himself! The way he'd say 'I've been a regular brown bear to-day,' and take himself in his arms and hug himself at the thoughts of the brute he had pretended. But every night he says to me: 'Better and better, old lady. What did we say of her? She'll come through it, the true golden gold. This'll be the happiest piece of work we ever done.' And then he'd say, 'I'll be a grislier old growler to-morrow!' and laugh, he would, till John and me was often forced to slap his back, and bring it out of his windpipes with a little water."

Mr. Boffin, with his face bent over his heavy hand, made no sound, but rolled his shoulders when thus referred to, as if he were vastly enjoying himself.

"And so, my good and pretty," pursued Mrs. Boffin, "you was married, and there was we hid up in the church-organ by this husband of yours; for he wouldn't let us out with it then, as was first meant. 'No,' he says, 'she's so unselfish and contented, that I can't afford to be rich yet. I must wait a little longer.' Then, when baby was expected, he says, 'She is such a cheerful, glorious housewife that I can't afford to be rich yet. I must wait a little longer.' Then when baby was born, he says, 'She is so much better than she ever was, that I can't afford to be rich yet. I must wait a little longer.' And so he goes on and on, till I says outright, 'Now, John, if you don't fix a time for setting her up in her own house and home, and letting us walk out of it, I'll turn Informer.' Then he says he'll only wait to triumph beyond what we ever thought possible, and to show her to us better than even we ever supposed; and he says, 'She shall see me under suspicion of having murdered myself, and *you* shall see how trusting and how true she'll be.' Well! Noddy and me agreed to that, and he was right, and here you are, and the horses is in, and the story is done, and God bless you my Beauty, and God bless us all!"

The pile of hands dispersed, and Bella and Mrs. Boffin took a good long hug of one another: to the apparent peril of the inexhaustible baby, lying staring in Bella's lap.

"But *is* the story done?" said Bella, pondering. "Is there no more of it?"

"What more of it should there be, deary?" returned Mrs. Boffin, full of glee.

"Are you sure you have left nothing out of it?" asked Bella.

"I don't think I have," said Mrs. Boffin, archly.

"John dear," said Bella, "you're a good nurse; will you please hold baby?" Having deposited the Inexhaustible in his arms with those words, Bella looked hard at Mr. Boffin, who had moved to a table where he was leaning his head upon his hand with his face turned away, and, quietly settling herself on her knees at his side, and drawing one arm over his shoulder, said: "Please I beg your

pardon, and I made a small mistake of a word when I took leave of you last. Please I think you are better (not worse) than Hopkins, better (not worse) than Dancer, better (not worse) than Blackberry Jones, better (not worse) than any of them! Please something more!" cried Bella, with an exultant ringing laugh as she struggled with him and forced him to turn his delighted face to hers. "Please I have found out something not yet mentioned. Please I don't believe you are a hard-hearted miser at all, and please I don't believe you ever for one single minute were!"

At this, Mrs. Boffin fairly screamed with rapture, and sat beating her feet upon the floor, clapping her hands, and bobbing herself backwards and forwards, like a demented member of some Mandarin's family.

"O, I understand you now, sir!" cried Bella. "I want neither you nor any one else to tell me the rest of the story. I can tell it to *you*, now, if you would like to hear it."

"Can you, my dear?" said Mr. Boffin. "Tell it then."

"What?" cried Bella, holding him prisoner by the coat with both hands. "When you saw what a greedy little wretch you were the patron of, you determined to show her how much misused and misprized riches could do, and often had done, to spoil people; did you? Not caring what she thought of you (and Goodness knows *that* was of no consequence!) you showed her, in yourself, the most detestable sides of wealth, saying in your own mind, 'This shallow creature would never work the truth out of her own weak soul, if she had a hundred years to do it in; but a glaring instance kept before her may open even her eyes and set her thinking. That was what you said to yourself; was it, sir?'"

"I never said anything of the sort," Mr. Boffin declared in a state of the highest enjoyment.

"Then you ought to have said it, sir," returned Bella, giving him two pulls and one kiss, "for you must have thought and meant it. You saw that good fortune was turning my stupid head and hardening my silly heart—was making me grasping, calculating, insolent, insufferable—and you took the pains to be the dearest and kindest fingerpost that ever was set up anywhere, pointing out the road that I was taking and the end it led to. Confess instantly!"

"John," said Mr. Boffin, one broad piece of sunshine from head to foot, "I wish you'd help me out of this."

"You can't be heard by counsel, sir," returned Bella. "You must speak for yourself. Confess instantly!"

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Boffin, "the truth is, that when we did go in for the little scheme that my old lady has pintoed out, I did put it to John, what did he think of going in for some such general scheme as *you* have pintoed out? But I didn't in any way so word it, because I didn't in any way so mean it. I only said to John, wouldn't it be more consistent, me going in for being a reg'lar brown bear respecting him, to go in as a reg'lar brown bear all round?"

"Confess this minute, sir," said Bella, "that you did it to correct and amend me!"

"Certainly, my dear child," said Mr. Boffin, "I didn't do it to harm

you; you may be sure of that. And I did hope it might just hint a caution. Still, it ought to be mentioned that no sooner had my old lady found out John, than John made known to her and me that he had had his eye upon a thankless person by the name of Silas Wegg. Partly for the punishment of which Wegg, by leading him on in a very unhandsome and underhanded game that he was playing, them books that you and me bought so many of together (and, by-the-by, my dear, he wasn't Blackberry Jones, but Blewberry) was read aloud to me by that person of the name of Silas Wegg aforesaid."

Bella, who was still on her knees at Mr. Boffin's feet, gradually sank down into a sitting posture on the ground, as she meditated more and more thoughtfully, with her eyes upon his beaming face.

"Still," said Bella, after this meditative pause, "there remain two things that I cannot understand. Mrs. Boffin never supposed any part of the change in Mr. Boffin to be real; did she?—You never did; did you?" asked Bella, turning to her.

"No!" returned Mrs. Boffin, with a most rotund and glowing negative.

"And yet you took it very much to heart," said Bella. "I remember its making you very uneasy, indeed."

"Ecod, you see Mrs. John has a sharp eye, John!" cried Mr. Boffin, shaking his head with an admiring air. "You're right, my dear. The old lady nearly blowed us into shivers and smithers, many times."

"Why?" asked Bella. "How did that happen, when she was in your secret?"

"Why, it was a weakness in the old lady," said Mr. Boffin; "and yet, to tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I'm rather proud of it. My dear, the old lady thinks so high of me that she couldn't abear to see and hear me coming out as a reg'lar brown one. Couldn't abear to make-believe as I meant it! In consequence of which, we was everlastingly in danger with her."

Mrs. Boffin laughed heartily at herself; but a certain glistening in her honest eyes revealed that she was by no means cured of that dangerous propensity.

"I assure you, my dear," said Mr. Boffin, "that on the celebrated day when I made what has since been agreed upon to be my grandest demonstration—I allude to Mew says the cat, Quack quack says the duck, and Bow-wow-wow says the dog—I assure you, my dear, that on that celebrated day, them flinty and unbelieving words hit my old lady so hard on my account, that I had to hold her, to prevent her running out after you, and defending me by saying I was playing a part."

Mrs. Boffin laughed heartily again, and her eyes glistened again, and it then appeared, not only that in that burst of sarcastic eloquence Mr. Boffin was considered by his two fellow-conspirators to have outdone himself, but that in his own opinion it was a remarkable achievement. "Never thought of it afore the moment, my dear!" he observed to Bella. "When John said, if he had been so happy as to win your affections and possess your heart, it come into my head to turn round upon him with 'Win her affections and pos-

sess her heart! Mew says the cat, Quack quack says the duck, and Bow-wow-wow says the dog.' I couldn't tell you how it come into my head or where from, but it had so much the sound of a rasper that I own to you it astonished myself. I was awful nigh bursting out a laughing though, when it made John stare!"

"You said, my pretty," Mrs. Boffin reminded Bella, "that there was one other thing you couldn't understand."

"O yes!" cried Bella, covering her face with her hands; "but that I never shall be able to understand as long as I live. It is, how John could love me so when I so little deserved it, and how you, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, could be so forgetful of yourselves, and take such pains and trouble, to make me a little better, and after all to help him to so unworthy a wife. But I am very very grateful."

It was John Harmon's turn then—John Harmon now for good, and John Rokesmith for nevermore—to plead with her (quite unnecessarily) in behalf of his deception, and to tell her, over and over again, that it had been prolonged by her own winning graces in her supposed station of life. This led on to many interchanges of endearment and enjoyment on all sides, in the midst of which the Inexhaustible being observed staring, in a most imbecile manner, on Mrs. Boffin's breast, was pronounced to be supernaturally intelligent as to the whole transaction, and was made to declare to the ladies and gemplemorums, with a wave of the speckled fist (with difficulty detached from an exceedingly short waist), "I have already informed my venerable Ma that I know all about it!"

Then, said John Harmon, would Mrs. John Harmon come and see her house? And a dainty house it was, and a tastefully beautiful; and they went through it in procession; the Inexhaustible on Mrs. Boffin's bosom (still staring) occupying the middle station, and Mr. Boffin bringing up the rear. And on Bella's exquisite toilette table was an ivory casket, and in the casket were jewels the like of which she had never dreamed of, and aloft on an upper floor was a nursery garnished as with rainbows; "though we were hard put to it," said John Harmon, "to get it done in so short a time."

The house inspected, emissaries removed the Inexhaustible, who was shortly afterwards heard screaming among the rainbows; whereupon Bella withdrew herself from the presence and knowledge of gemplemorums, and the screaming ceased, and smiling Peace associated herself with that young olive branch.

"Come and look in, Noddy!" said Mrs. Boffin to Mr. Boffin.

Mr. Boffin, submitting to be led on tiptoe to the nursery door, looked in with immense satisfaction, although there was nothing to see but Bella in a musing state of happiness, seated in a little low chair upon the hearth, with her child in her fair young arms, and her soft eyelashes shading her eyes from the fire.

"It looks as if the old man's spirit had found rest at last; don't it?" said Mrs. Boffin.

"Yes, old lady."

"And as if his money had turned bright again, after a long long rust in the dark, and was at last a beginning to sparkle in the sunlight?"

"Yes, old lady."

"And it makes a pretty and a promising pieter; don't it?"

"Yes, old lady."

But, aware at the instant of a fine opening for a point, Mr. Boffin quenched that observation in this—delivered in the grisliest growling of the regular brown bear. "A pretty and a hopeful pieter? Mew, Quack quack, Bow-wow!" And then trotted silently downstairs, with his shoulders in a state of the liveliest commotion.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHECKMATE TO THE FRIENDLY MOVE.

Mr. and Mrs. John Harmon had so timed their taking possession of their rightful name and their London house, that the event befel on the very day when the last waggon-load of the last Mound was driven out at the gates of Boffin's Bower. As it jolted away, Mr. Wegg felt that the last load was correspondingly removed from his mind, and hailed the auspicious season when that black sheep, Boffin, was to be closely sheared.

Over the whole slow process of levelling the Mounds, Silas had kept watch with rapacious eyes. But, eyes no less rapacious had watched the growth of the Mounds in years bygone, and had vigilantly sifted the dust of which they were composed. No valuables turned up. How should there be any, seeing that the old hard jailer of Harmony Jail had coined every waif and stray into money, long before?

Though disappointed by this bare result, Mr. Wegg felt too sensibly relieved by the close of the labour, to grumble to any great extent. A foreman-representative of the dust contractors, purchasers of the Mounds, had worn Mr. Wegg down to skin and bone. This supervisor of the proceedings, asserting his employers' rights to cart off by daylight, nightlight, torchlight, when they would, must have been the death of Silas if the work had lasted much longer. Seeming never to need sleep himself, he would reappear, with a tied-up broken head, in fantail hat and velvetten smalls, like an accursed goblin, at the most unholy and untimely hours. Tired out by keeping close ward over a long day's work in fog and rain, Silas would have just crawled to bed and be dozing, when a horrid shake and rumble under his pillow would announce an approaching train of carts, escorted by this Demon of Unrest, to fall to work again. At another time, he would be rumbled up out of his soundest sleep, in the dead of the night; at another, would be kept at his post eight-and-forty hours on end. The more his persecutor besought him not to trouble himself to turn out, the more suspicious was the crafty Wegg that indications had been observed of something hidden somewhere, and that attempts were on foot to circumvent him. So continually broken was his rest through these means, that he led the life of having wagered to keep ten thousand dog-watches in ten thousand

hours, and looked piteously upon himself as always getting up and yet never going to bed. So gaunt and haggard had he grown at last, that his wooden leg showed disproportionate, and presented a thriving appearance in contrast with the rest of his plagued body, which might almost have been termed chubby.

However, Wegg's comfort was, that all his disagreeables were now over, and that he was immediately coming into his property. Of late, the grindstone did undoubtedly appear to have been whirling at his own nose rather than Boffin's, but Boffin's nose was now to be sharpened fine. Thus far, Mr. Wegg had let his dusty friend off lightly, having been baulked in that amiable design of frequently dining with him, by the machinations of the sleepless dustman. He had been constrained to depute Mr. Venus to keep their dusty friend, Boffin, under inspection, while he himself turned lank and lean at the Bower.

To Mr. Venus's museum Mr. Wegg repaired when at length the Mounds were down and gone. It being evening, he found that gentleman, as he expected, seated over his fire; but did not find him, as he expected, floating his powerful mind in tea.

"Why, you smell rather comfortable here!" said Wegg, seeming to take it ill, and stopping and sniffing as he entered.

"I *am* rather comfortable, sir," said Venus.

"You don't use lemon in your business, do you?" asked Wegg, sniffing again.

"No, Mr. Wegg," said Venus. "When I use it at all, I mostly use it in cobblers' punch."

"What do you call cobblers' punch?" demanded Wegg, in a worse humour than before.

"It's difficult to impart the receipt for it, sir," returned Venus, "because, however particular you may be in allotting your materials, so much will still depend upon the individual gifts, and there being a feeling thrown into it. But the groundwork is gin."

"In a Dutch bottle?" said Wegg gloomily, as he sat himself down.

"Very good, sir, very good!" cried Venus. "Will you partake, sir?"

"Will I partake?" returned Wegg very surlily. "Why, of course I will! *Will* a man partake, as has been tormented out of his five senses by an everlasting dustman with his head tied up! *Will* he, too! As if he wouldn't!"

"Don't let it put you out, Mr. Wegg. You don't seem in your usual spirits."

"If you come to that, you don't seem in your usual spirits," growled Wegg. "You seem to be setting up for lively."

This circumstance appeared, in his then state of mind, to give Mr. Wegg uncommon offence.

"And you've been having your hair cut!" said Wegg, missing the usual dusty shock.

"Yes, Mr. Wegg. But don't let that put you out, either."

"And I am blest if you ain't getting fat!" said Wegg, with culminating discontent. "What are you going to do next?"

"Well, Mr. Wegg," said Venus, smiling in a sprightly manner, "I suspect you could hardly guess what I am going to do next."

"I don't want to guess," retorted Wegg. "All I've got to say is, that it's well for you that the diuision of labour has been what it has been. It's well for you to have had so light a part in this business, when mine has been so heavy. You haven't had *your* rest broke, I'll be bound."

"Not at all, sir," said Venus. "Never rested so well in all my life, I thank you."

"Ah!" grumbled Wegg, "you should have been me. If you had been me, and had been fretted out of your bed, and your sleep, and your meals, and your mind, for a stretch of months together, *you'd* have been out of condition and out of sorts."

"Certainly, it has trained you down, Mr. Wegg," said Venus, contemplating his figure with an artist's eye. "Trained you down very low, it has! So weazen and yellow is the kivering upon your bones, that one might almost fancy you had come to give a look-in upon the French gentleman in the corner, instead of me."

Mr. Wegg, glancing in great dudgeon towards the French gentleman's corner, seemed to notice something new there, which induced him to glance at the opposite corner, and then to put on his glasses and stare at all the nooks and corners of the dim shop in succession.

"Why, you've been having the place cleaned up!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Mr. Wegg. By the hand of adorable woman."

"Then what you're going to do next, I suppose, is to get married?"

"That's it, sir."

Silas took off his glasses again—finding himself too intensely disgusted by the sprightly appearance of his friend and partner, to bear a magnified view of him—and made the inquiry:

"To the old party?"

"Mr. Wegg!" said Venus, with a sudden flush of wrath. "The lady in question is not a old party."

"I meant," explained Wegg, testily, "to the party as formerly objected?"

"Mr. Wegg," said Venus, "in a case of so much delicacy, I must trouble you to say what you mean. There are strings that must not be played upon. No sir! Not sounded, unless in the most respectful and tuneful manner. Of such melodious strings is Miss Pleasant Riderhood formed."

"Then it is the lady as formerly objected?" said Wegg.

"Sir," returned Venus with dignity, "I accept the altered phrase. It is the lady as formerly objected."

"When is it to come off?" asked Silas.

"Mr. Wegg," said Venus, with another flush. "I cannot permit it to be put in the form of a Fight. I must temperately but firmly call upon you, sir, to amend that question."

"When is the lady," Wegg reluctantly demanded, constraining his ill temper in remembrance of the partnership and its stock in trade, "a going to give her 'and where she has already given her 'art?"

"Sir," returned Venus, "I again accept the altered phrase, and with pleasure. The lady is a going to give her 'and where she has already given her 'art, next Monday."

"Then the lady's objection has been met?" said Silas.

"Mr. Wegg," said Venus, "as I did name to you, I think, on a former occasion, if not on former occasions—"

"On former occasions," interrupted Wegg.

"—What," pursued Venus, "what the nature of the lady's objection was, I may impart, without violating any of the tender confidences since sprung up between the lady and myself, how it has been met, through the kind interference of two good friends of mine: one, previously acquainted with the lady: and one, not. The pint was thrown out, sir, by those two friends when they did me the great service of waiting on the lady to try if a union betwixt the lady and me could not be brought to bear—the pint, I say, was thrown out by them, sir, whether if, after marriage, I confined myself to the articulation of men, children, and the lower animals, it might not relieve the lady's mind of her feeling respecting being—as a lady—regarded in a bony light. It was a happy thought, sir, and it took root."

"It would seem, Mr. Venus," observed Wegg, with a touch of distrust, "that you are flush of friends?"

"Pretty well, sir," that gentleman answered, in a tone of placid mystery. "So-so, sir. Pretty well."

"However," said Wegg, after eyeing him with another touch of distrust, "I wish you joy. One man spends his fortune in one way, and another in another. You are going to try matrimony. I mean to try travelling."

"Indeed, Mr. Wegg?"

"Change of air, sea-scenery, and my natural rest, I hope may bring me round after the persecutions I have undergone from the dustman with his head tied up, which I just now mentioned. The tough job being ended and the Mounds laid low, the hour is come for Boffin to stump up. Would ten to-morrow morning suit you, partner, for finally bringing Boffin's nose to the grindstone?"

Ten to-morrow morning would quite suit Mr. Venus for that excellent purpose.

"You have had him well under inspection, I hope?" said Silas.

Mr. Venus had had him under inspection pretty well every day.

"Suppose you was just to step round to-night then, and give him orders from me—I say from me, because he knows I won't be played with—to be ready with his papers, his accounts, and his cash, at that time in the morning?" said Wegg. "And as a matter of form, which will be agreeable to your own feelings, before we go out (for I'll walk with you part of the way, though my leg gives under me with weariness), let's have a look at the stock in trade."

Mr. Venus produced it, and it was perfectly correct; Mr. Venus undertook to produce it again in the morning, and to keep tryst with Mr. Wegg on Boffin's doorstep as the clock struck ten. At a certain point of the road between Clerkenwell and Boffin's house (Mr. Wegg expressly insisted that there should be no prefix to the Golden Dustman's name) the partners separated for the night.

It was a very bad night; to which succeeded a very bad morning. The streets were so unusually slushy, muddy, and miserable, in the

morning, that Wegg rode to the scene of action; arguing that a man who was, as it were, going to the Bank to draw out a handsome property, could well afford that trifling expense.

Venus was punctual, and Wegg undertook to knock at the door, and conduct the conference. Door knocked at. Door opened.

"Boffin at home?"

The servant replied that *Mr. Boffin* was at home.

"He'll do," said Wegg, "though it ain't what I call him."

The servant inquired if they had any appointment?

"Now, I tell you what, young fellow," said Wegg, "I won't have it. This won't do for me. I don't want menials. I want Boffin."

They were shown into a waiting-room, where the all-powerful Wegg wore his hat, and whistled, and with his forefinger stirred up a clock that stood upon the chimney-piece, until he made it strike. In a few minutes they were shown upstairs into what used to be Boffin's room; which, besides the door of entrance, had folding-doors in it, to make it one of a suite of rooms when occasion required. Here, Boffin was seated at a library-table, and here Mr. Wegg, having imperiously motioned the servant to withdraw, drew up a chair and seated himself, in his hat, close beside him. Here, also, Mr. Wegg instantly underwent the remarkable experience of having his hat twitched off his head and thrown out of a window, which was opened and shut for the purpose.

"Be careful what insolent liberties you take in that gentleman's presence," said the owner of the hand which had done this, "or I will throw you after it."

Wegg involuntarily clapped his hand to his bare head, and stared at the Secretary. For, it was he addressed him with a severe countenance, and who had come in quietly by the folding-doors.

"Oh!" said Wegg, as soon as he recovered his suspended power of speech. "Very good! I gave directions for *you* to be dismissed. And you ain't gone, ain't you? Oh! We'll look into this presently, Very good!"

"No, nor *I* ain't gone," said another voice.

Somebody else had come in quietly by the folding-doors. Turning his head, Wegg beheld his persecutor, the ever-wakeful dustman, accoutred with fantail hat and velveteen smalls complete. Who, untying his tied-up broken head, revealed a head that was whole, and a face that was Sloppy's.

"Ha, ha, ha, gentlemen!" roared Sloppy in a peal of laughter, and with immeasurable relish. "He never thought as I could sleep standing, and often done it when I turned for Mrs. Higden! He never thought as I used to give Mrs. Higden the Police-news in different voices! But I did lead him a life all through it, gentlemen, I hope I really and truly *did*!" Here, Mr. Sloppy opening his mouth to a quite alarming extent, and throwing back his head to peal again, revealed incalculable buttons.

"Oh!" said Wegg, slightly discomfited, but not much as yet: "one and one is two not dismissed, is it? Bof—fin! Just let me ask a question. Who set this chap on, in this dress, when the carting began? Who employed this fellow?"

"I say!" remonstrated Sloppy, jerking his head forward. "No fellows, or I'll throw you out of winder!"

Mr. Boffin appeased him with a wave of his hand, and said: "I employed him, Wegg."

"Oh! You employed him, Boffin? Very good. Mr. Venus, we raise our terms, and we can't do better than proceed to business. Bof—fin! I want the room cleared of these two scum."

"That's not going to be done, Wegg," replied Mr. Boffin, sitting composedly on the library-table, at one end, while the Secretary sat composedly on it at the other.

"Bof—fin! Not going to be done?" repeated Wegg. "Not at your peril?"

"No, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, shaking his head good-humouredly. "Not at my peril, and not on any other terms."

Wegg reflected a moment, and then said: "Mr. Venus, will you be so good as hand me over that same dockymment?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Venus, handing it to him with much politeness. "There it is. Having now, sir, parted with it, I wish to make a small observation: not so much because it is anyways necessary, or expresses any new doctrine or discovery, as because it is a comfort to my mind. Silas Wegg, you are a precious old rascal."

Mr. Wegg, who, as if anticipating a compliment, had been beating time with the paper to the other's politeness until this unexpected conclusion came upon him, stopped rather abruptly.

"Silas Wegg," said Venus, "know that I took the liberty of taking Mr. Boffin into our concern as a sleeping partner, at a very early period of our firm's existence."

"Quite true," added Mr. Boffin; "and I tested Venus by making him a pretended proposal or two; and I found him on the whole a very honest man, Wegg."

"So Mr. Boffin, in his indulgence, is pleased to say," Venus remarked: "though in the beginning of this dirt, my hands were not, for a few hours, quite as clean as I could wish. But I hope I made early and full amends."

"Venus, you did," said Mr. Boffin. "Certainly, certainly, certainly."

Venus inclined his head with respect and gratitude. "Thank you, sir. I am much obliged to you, sir, for all. For your good opinion now, for your way of receiving and encouraging me when I first put myself in communication with you, and for the influence since so kindly brought to bear upon a certain lady, both by yourself and by Mr. John Harmon." To whom, when thus making mention of him, he also bowed.

Wegg followed the name with sharp ears, and the action with sharp eyes, and a certain cringing air was infusing itself into his bullying air, when his attention was re-claimed by Venus.

"Everything else between you and me, Mr. Wegg," said Venus, "now explains itself, and you can now make out, sir, without further words from me. But totally to prevent any unpleasantness or mistake that might arise on what I consider an important point, to be made quite clear at the close of our acquaintance, I beg the leave of Mr. Boffin and Mr. John Harmon to repeat an observation which I

have already had the pleasure of bringing under your notice. You are a precious old rascal!"

"You are a fool," said Wegg, with a snap of his fingers, "and I'd have got rid of you before now, if I could have struck out any way of doing it. I have thought it over, I can tell you. You may go, and welcome. You leave the more for me. Because, you know," said Wegg, dividing his next observation between Mr. Boffin and Mr. Harmon, "I am worth my price, and I mean to have it. This getting off is all very well in its way, and it tells with such an anatomical Pump as this one," pointing out Mr. Venus, "but it won't do with a Man. I am here to be bought off, and I have named my figure. Now, buy me, or leave me."

"I'll leave you, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, laughing, "as far as I am concerned."

"Bof—fin!" replied Wegg, turning upon him with a severe air, "I understand *your* new-born boldness. I see the brass underneath *your* silver plating. *You* have got *your* nose put out of joint. Knowing that you've nothing at stake, you can afford to come the independent game. Why, you're just so much smeary glass to see through, you know! But Mr. Harmon is in another situation. What Mr. Harmon risks, is quite another pair of shoes. Now, I've heerd something lately about this being Mr. Harmon—I make out now, some hints that I've met on that subject in the newspaper—and I drop you, Bof—fin, as beneath my notice. I ask Mr. Harmon whether he has any idea of the contents of this present paper?"

"It is a will of my late father's, of more recent date than the will proved by Mr. Boffin (address whom again, as you have addressed him already, and I'll knock you down), leaving the whole of his property to the Crown," said John Harmon, with as much indifference as was compatible with extreme sternness.

"Right you are!" cried Wegg. "Then," screwing the weight of his body upon his wooden leg, and screwing his wooden head very much on one side, and screwing up one eye: "then, I put the question to you, what's this paper worth?"

"Nothing," said John Harmon.

Wegg had repeated the word with a sneer, and was entering on some sarcastic retort, when, to his boundless amazement, he found himself gripped by the cravat; shaken until his teeth chattered; shoved back, staggering, into a corner of the room; and pinned there.

"You scoundrel!" said John Harmon, whose seafaring hold was like that of a vice.

"You're knocking my head against the wall," urged Silas faintly.

"I mean to knock your head against the wall," returned John Harmon, suiting his action to his words, with the heartiest good will; "and I'd give a thousand pounds for leave to knock your brains out. Listen, you scoundrel, and look at that Dutch bottle."

Sloppy held it up, for his edification.

"That Dutch bottle, scoundrel, contained the latest will of the many wills made by my unhappy self-tormenting father. That will gives everything absolutely to my noble benefactor and yours, Mr. Boffin, excluding and reviling me, and my sister (then already dead of a

broken heart), by name. That Dutch bottle was found by my noble benefactor and yours, after he entered on possession of the estate. That Dutch bottle distressed him beyond measure, because, though I and my sister were both no more, it cast a slur upon our memory which he knew we had done nothing in our miserable youth, to deserve. That Dutch bottle, therefore, he buried in the Mound belonging to him, and there it lay while you, you thankless wretch, were prodding and poking—often very near it, I dare say. His intention was, that it should never see the light; but he was afraid to destroy it, lest to destroy such a document, even with his great generous motive, might be an offence at law. After the discovery was made here who I was, Mr. Boffin, still restless on the subject, told me, upon certain conditions impossible for such a hound as you to appreciate, the secret of that Dutch bottle. I urged upon him the necessity of its being dug up, and the paper being legally produced and established. The first thing you saw him do, and the second thing has been done without your knowledge. Consequently, the paper now rattling in your hand as I shake you—and I should like to shake the life out of you—is worth less than the rotten cork of the Dutch bottle, do you understand?"

Judging from the fallen countenance of Silas as his head wagged backwards and forwards in a most uncomfortable manner, he did understand.

"Now, scoundrel," said John Harmon, taking another sailor-like turn on his cravat and holding him in his corner at arms' length, "I shall make two more short speeches to you, because I hope they will torment you. Your discovery was a genuine discovery (such as it was), for nobody had thought of looking into that place. Neither did we know you had made it, until Venus spoke to Mr. Boffin, though I kept you under good observation from my first appearance here, and though Sloppy has long made it the chief occupation and delight of his life, to attend you like your shadow. I tell you this, that you may know we knew enough of you to persuade Mr. Boffin to let us lead you on, deluded, to the last possible moment, in order that your disappointment might be the heaviest possible disappointment. That's the first short speech, do you understand?"

Here, John Harmon assisted his comprehension with another shake.

"Now, scoundrel," he pursued, "I am going to finish. You supposed me just now, to be the possessor of my father's property.—So I am. But through any act of my father's, or by any right I have? No. Through the munificence of Mr. Boffin. The conditions that he made with me, before parting with the secret of the Dutch bottle, were, that I should take the fortune, and that he should take his Mound and no more. I owe everything I possess, solely to the disinterestedness, uprightness, tenderness, goodness (there are no words to satisfy me) of Mr. and Mrs. Boffin. And when, knowing what I knew, I saw such a mud-worm as you presume to rise in this house against this noble soul, the wonder is," added John Harmon through his clenched teeth, and with a very ugly turn indeed on Wegg's cravat, "that I didn't try to twist your head off, and fling

that out of window! So. That's the last short speech, do you understand?"

Silas, released, put his hand to his throat, cleared it, and looked as if he had a rather large fishbone in that region. Simultaneously with this action on his part in his corner, a singular, and on the surface an incomprehensible, movement was made by Mr. Sloppy: who began backing towards Mr. Wegg along the wall, in the manner of a porter or heaver who is about to lift a sack of flour or coals.

"I am sorry, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, in his clemency, "that my old lady and I can't have a better opinion of you than the bad one we are forced to entertain. But I shouldn't like to leave you, after all said and done, worse off in life than I found you. Therefore say in a word, before we part, what it'll cost to set you up in another stall."

"And in another place," John Harmon struck in. "You don't come outside these windows."

"Mr. Boffin," returned Wegg in avaricious humiliation: "when I first had the honor of making your acquaintance, I had got together a collection of ballads which was, I may say, above price."

"Then they can't be paid for," said John Harmon, "and you had better not try, my dear sir."

"Pardon me, Mr. Boffin," resumed Wegg, with a malignant glance in the last speaker's direction, "I was putting the case to you, who, if my senses did not deceive me, put the case to me. I had a very choice collection of ballads, and there was a new stock of gingerbread in the tin box. I say no more, but would rather leave it to you."

"But it's difficult to name what's right," said Mr. Boffin uneasily, with his hand in his pocket, "and I don't want to go beyond what's right, because you really have turned out such a very bad fellow. So artful, and so ungrateful you have been, Wegg; for when did I ever injure you?"

"There was also," Mr. Wegg went on, in a meditative manner, "a errand connection, in which I was much respected. But I would not wish to be deemed covetuous, and I would rather leave it to you, Mr. Boffin."

"Upon my word, I don't know what to put it at," the Golden Dustman muttered.

"There was likewise," resumed Wegg, "a pair of trestles, for which alone a Irish person, who was deemed a judge of trestles, offered five and six—a sum I would not hear of, for I should have lost by it—and there was a stool, a umbrella, a clothes-horse, and a tray. But I leave it to you, Mr. Boffin."

The Golden Dustman, seeming to be engaged in some abstruse calculation, Mr. Wegg assisted him with the following additional items.

"There was, further, Miss Elizabeth, Master George, Aunt Jane, and Uncle Parker. Ah! When a man thinks of the loss of such patronage as that; when a man finds so fair a garden rooted up by pigs; he finds it hard indeed, without going high, to work it into money. But I leave it wholly to you, sir."

Mr. Sloppy still continued his singular, and on the surface his incomprehensible, movement.

"Leading on has been mentioned," said Wegg with a melancholy air, "and it's not easy to say how far the tone of my mind may have been lowered by unwholesome reading on the subject of Misers, when you was leading me and others on to think you one yourself, sir. All I can say is, that I felt my tone of mind a lowering at the time. And how can a man put a price upon his mind! There was likewise a hat just now. But I leave the ole to you, Mr. Boffin."

"Come!" said Mr. Boffin. "Here's a couple of pound."

"In justice to myself, I couldn't take it, sir."

The words were but out of his mouth when John Harmon lifted his finger, and Sloppy, who was now close to Wegg, backed to Wegg's back, stooped, grasped his coat collar behind with both hands, and deftly swung him up like the sack of flour or coals before mentioned. A countenance of special discontent and amazement Mr. Wegg exhibited in this position, with his buttons almost as prominently on view as Sloppy's own, and with his wooden leg in a highly unaccommodating state. But, not for many seconds was his countenance visible in the room; for, Sloppy lightly trotted out with him and trotted down the staircase, Mr. Venus attending to open the street door. Mr. Sloppy's instructions had been to deposit his burden in the road; but, a scavenger's cart happening to stand unattended at the corner, with its little ladder planted against the wheel, Mr. S. found it impossible to resist the temptation of shooting Mr. Silas Wegg into the cart's contents. A somewhat difficult feat, achieved with great dexterity, and with a prodigious splash.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT WAS CAUGHT IN THE TRAPS THAT WERE SET.

How Bradley Headstone had been racked and riven in his mind since the quiet evening when by the river-side he had risen, as it were, out of the ashes of the Bargeman, none but he could have told. Not even he could have told, for such misery can only be felt.

First, he had to bear the combined weight of the knowledge of what he had done, of that haunting reproach that he might have done it so much better, and of the dread of discovery. This was load enough to crush him, and he laboured under it day and night. It was as heavy on him in his scanty sleep, as in his red-eyed waking hours. It bore him down with a dread unchanging monotony, in which there was not a moment's variety. The overweighted beast of burden, or the overweighted slave, can for certain instants shift the physical load, and find some slight respite even in enforcing additional pain upon such a set of muscles or such a limb. Not even that poor mockery of relief could the wretched man obtain,

under the steady pressure of the infernal atmosphere into which he had entered.

Time went by, and no visible suspicion dogged him; time went by, and in such public accounts of the attack as were renewed at intervals, he began to see Mr. Lightwood (who acted as lawyer for the injured man) straying further from the fact, going wider of the issue, and evidently slackening in his zeal. By degrees, a glimmering of the cause of this began to break on Bradley's sight. Then came the chance encounter with Mr. Milvey at the railway station (where he often lingered in his leisure hours, as a place where any fresh news of his deed would be circulated, or any placard referring to it would be posted), and then he saw in the light what he had brought about.

For, then he saw that through his desperate attempt to separate those two for ever, he had been made the means of uniting them. That he had dipped his hands in blood, to mark himself a miserable fool and tool. That Eugene Wrayburn, for his wife's sake, set him aside and left him to crawl along his blasted course. He thought of Fate, or Providence, or be the directing Power what it might, as having put a fraud upon him—overreached him—and in his impotent mad rage bit, and tore, and had his fit.

New assurance of the truth came upon him in the next few following days, when it was put forth how the wounded man had been married on his bed, and to whom, and how, though always in a dangerous condition, he was a shade better. Bradley would far rather have been seized for his murder, than he would have read that passage, knowing himself spared, and knowing why.

But, not to be still further defrauded and overreached—which he would be, if implicated by Riderhood, and punished by the law for his abject failure, as though it had been a success—he kept close in his school during the day, ventured out warily at night, and went no more to the railway station. He examined the advertisements in the newspapers for any sign that Riderhood acted on his hinted threat of so summoning him to renew their acquaintance, but found none. Having paid him handsomely for the support and accommodation he had had at the Lock House, and knowing him to be a very ignorant man who could not write, he began to doubt whether he was to be feared at all, or whether they need ever meet again.

All this time, his mind was never off the rack, and his raging sense of having been made to fling himself across the chasm which divided those two, and bridge it over for their coming together, never cooled down. This horrible condition brought on other fits. He could not have said how many, or when; but he saw in the faces of his pupils that they had seen him in that state, and that they were possessed by a dread of his relapsing.

One winter day when a slight fall of snow was feathering the sills and frames of the schoolroom windows, he stood at his black board, crayon in hand, about to commence with a class; when, reading in the countenances of those boys that there was something wrong, and that they seemed in alarm for him, he turned his eyes to the door towards which they faced. He then saw a slouching man of for-

bidding appearance standing in the midst of the school, with a bundle under his arm; and saw that it was Riderhood.

He sat down on a stool which one of his boys put for him, and he had a passing knowledge that he was in danger of falling, and that his face was becoming distorted. But, the fit went off for that time, and he wiped his mouth, and stood up again.

"Beg your pardon, governor! By your leave!" said Riderhood, knuckling his forehead, with a chuckle and a leer. "What place may this be?"

"This is a school."

"Where young folks learns wot's right?" said Riderhood, gravely nodding. "Beg your pardon, governor! By your leave! But who teaches this school?"

"I do."

"You're the master, are you, learned governor?"

"Yes. I am the master."

"And a lovely thing it must be," said Riderhood, "fur to learn young folks wot's right, and fur to know wot *they* know wot you do it. Beg your pardon, learned governor! By your leave!—That there black board; wot's it for?"

"It is for drawing on, or writing on."

"Is it though!" said Riderhood. "Who'd have thought it, from the looks on it! *Would* you be so kind as write your name upon it, learned governor?" (In a wheedling tone.)

Bradley hesitated for a moment; but placed his usual signature, enlarged, upon the board.

"I ain't a learned character myself," said Riderhood, surveying the class, "but I do admire learning in others. I should dearly like to hear these here young folks read that there name off, from the writing."

The arms of the class went up. At the miserable master's nod, the shrill chorus arose: "Bradley Headstone!"

"No?" cried Riderhood. "You don't mean it? Headstone! Why, that's in a churchyard. Hooroar for another turn!"

Another tossing of arms, another nod, and another shrill chorus: "Bradley Headstone!"

"I've got it now!" said Riderhood, after attentively listening, and internally repeating: "Bradley. I see. Chris'en name, Bradley similar to Roger which is my own. Eh? Fam'ly name, Headstone, similar to Riderhood which is my own. Eh?"

Shrill chorus. "Yes!"

"Might you be acquainted, learned governor," said Riderhood, "with a person of about your own heighth and breadth, and wot 'ud pull down in a scale about your own weight, answering to a name sounding summat like Totherest?"

With a desperation in him that made him perfectly quiet, though his jaw was heavily squared; with his eyes upon Riderhood; and with traces of quickened breathing in his nostrils; the school-master replied, in a suppressed voice, after a pause: "I think I know the man you mean."

"I thought you knowed the man I mean, learned governor. I want the man."

With a half glance around him at his pupils, Bradley returned: "Do you suppose he is here?"

"Begging your pardon, learned governor, and by your leave," said Riderhood, with a laugh, "how could I suppose he's here, when there's nobody here but you, and me, and these young lambs wot you're a learning on? But he is most excellent company, that man, and I want him to come and see me at my Lock, up the river."

"I'll tell him so."

"D'ye think he'll come?" asked Riderhood.

"I am sure he will."

"Having got your word for him," said Riderhood, "I shall count upon him. P'raps you'd so fur obleege me, learned governor, as tell him that if he don't come precious soon, I'll look him up."

"He shall know it."

"Thankee. As I says a while ago," pursued Riderhood, changing his hoarse tone and leering round upon the class again, "though not a learned character my own self, I do admire learning in others, to be sure! Being here and having met with your kind attention, Master, might I, afore I go, ask a question of these here young lambs of yourn?"

"If it is in the way of school," said Bradley, always sustaining his dark look at the other, and speaking in his suppressed voice, "you may."

"Oh! It's in the way of school!" cried Riderhood. "I'll pound it, Master, to be in the way of school. Wot's the divisions of water, my lambs? Wot sorts of water is there on the land?"

Shrill chorus: "Seas, rivers, lakes, and ponds."

"Seas, rivers, lakes, and ponds," said Riderhood. "They've got all the lot, Master! Blowed if I shouldn't have left out lakes, never having clapped eyes upon one, to my knowledge. Seas, rivers, lakes, and ponds. Wot is it, lambs, as they ketches in seas, rivers, lakes, and ponds?"

Shrill chorus (with some contempt for the ease of the question): "Fish!"

"Good a-gin!" said Riderhood. "But wot else is it, my lambs, as they sometimes ketches in rivers?"

Chorus at a loss. One shrill voice: "Weed!"

"Good agin?" cried Riderhood. "But it ain't weed neither. You'll never guess, my dears. Wot is it, besides fish, as they sometimes ketches in rivers? Well! I'll tell you. It's suits o' clothes."

Bradley's face changed.

"Leastways, lambs," said Riderhood, observing him out of the corners of his eyes, "that's wot I my own self sometimes ketches in rivers. For strike me blind, my lambs, if I didn't ketch in a river the very bundle under my arm!"

The class looked at the master, as if appealing from the irregular entrapment of this mode of examination. The master looked at the examiner, as if he would have torn him to pieces.

"I ask your pardon, learned governor," said Riderhood, smearing

his sleeve across his mouth as he laughed with a relish, "tain't fair to the lambs, I know. It was a bit of fun of mine. But upon my soul I drewed this here bundle out of a river! It's a Bargeman's suit of clothes. You see, it had been sunk there by the man as wore it, and I got it up."

"How do you know it was sunk by the man who wore it?" asked Bradley.

"'Cause I see him do it," said Riderhood.

They looked at each other. Bradley, slowly withdrawing his eyes, turned his face to the black board and slowly wiped his name out.

"A heap of thanks, Master," said Riderhood, "for bestowing so much of your time, and of the lambses' time, upon a man as hasn't got no other recommendation to you than being a honest man. Wishing to see at my Lock up the river, the person as we've spoke of, and as you've answered for, I takes my leave of the lambs and of their learned governor both."

With those words, he slouched out of the school, leaving the master to get through his weary work as he might, and leaving the whispering pupils to observe the master's face until he fell into the fit which had been long impending.

The next day but one was Saturday, and a holiday. Bradley rose early, and set out on foot for Plashwater Weir Mill Lock. He rose so early that it was not yet light when he began his journey. Before extinguishing the candle by which he had dressed himself, he made a little parcel of his decent silver watch and its decent guard, and wrote inside the paper: "Kindly take care of these for me." He then addressed the parcel to Miss Peecher, and left it on the most protected corner of the little seat in her little porch.

It was a cold hard easterly morning when he latched the garden gate and turned away. The light snowfall which had feathered his schoolroom windows on the Thursday, still lingered in the air, and was falling white, while the wind blew black. The tardy day did not appear until he had been on foot two hours, and had traversed a great part of London from east to west. Such breakfast as he had, he took at the comfortless public-house where he had parted from Riderhood on the occasion of their night-walk. He took it, standing at the littered bar, and looked loweringly at a man who stood where Riderhood had stood that early morning.

He outwalked the short day, and was on the towing-path by the river, somewhat footsore, when the night closed in. Still two or three miles short of the Lock, he slackened his pace then, but went steadily on. The ground was now covered with snow, though thinly, and there were floating lumps of ice in the more exposed parts of the river, and broken sheets of ice under the shelter of the banks. He took heed of nothing but the ice, the snow, and the distance, until he saw a light ahead, which he knew gleamed from the Lock House window. It arrested his steps, and he looked all around. The ice, and the snow, and he, and the one light, had absolute possession of the dreary scene. In the distance before him, lay the place where he had struck the worse than useless blows that mocked him with Lizzie's presence there as Eugene's wife. In the distance behind him,

lay the place where the children with pointing arms had seemed to devote him to the demons in crying out his name. Within there, where the light was, was the man who as to both distances could give him up to ruin. To these limits had his world shrunk.

He mended his pace, keeping his eyes upon the light with a strange intensity, as if he were taking aim at it. When he approached it so nearly as that it parted into rays, they seemed to fasten themselves to him and draw him on. When he struck the door with his hand, his foot followed so quickly on his hand, that he was in the room before he was bidden to enter.

The light was the joint product of a fire and a candle. Between the two, with his feet on the iron fender, sat Riderhood, pipe in mouth.

He looked up with a surly nod when his visitor came in. His visitor looked down with a surly nod. His outer clothing removed, the visitor then took a seat on the opposite side of the fire.

"Not a smoker, I think?" said Riderhood, pushing a bottle to him across the table.

"No."

They both lapsed into silence, with their eyes upon the fire.

"You don't need to be told I am here," said Bradley at length.

"Who is to begin?"

"I'll begin," said Riderhood, "when I've smoked this here pipe out."

He finished it with great deliberation, knocked out the ashes on the hob, and put it by.

"I'll begin," he then repeated, "Bradley Headstone, Master, if you wish it."

"Wish it? I wish to know what you want with me."

"And so you shall." Riderhood had looked hard at his hands and his pockets, apparently as a precautionary measure lest he should have any weapon about him. But, he now leaned forward, turning the collar of his waistcoat with an inquisitive finger, and asked, "Why, where's your watch?"

"I have left it behind."

"I want it. But it can be fetched. I've took a fancy to it."

Bradley answered with a contemptuous laugh.

"I want it," repeated Riderhood, in a louder voice, "and I mean to have it."

"That is what you want of me, is it?"

"No," said Riderhood, still louder; "it's on'y part of what I want of you. I want money of you."

"Anything else?"

"Everything else!" roared Riderhood, in a very loud and furious way. "Answer me like that, and I won't talk to you at all."

Bradley looked at him.

"Don't so much as look at me like that, or I won't talk to you at all," vociferated Riderhood. "But, instead of talking, I'll bring my hand down upon you with all its weight," heavily smiting the table with great force, "and smash you!"

"Go on," said Bradley, after moistening his lips.

"O! I'm a going on. Don't you fear but I'll go on full-fast enough for you, and fur enough for you, without your telling. Look here, Bradley Headstone, Master. You might have split the T'other governor to chips and wedges, without my caring, except that I might have come upon you for a glass or so now and then. Else why have to do with you at all? But when you copied my clothes, and when you copied my neckhankercher, and when you shook blood upon me after you had done the trick, you did wot I'll be paid for and paid heavy for. If it come to be throw'd upon you, you was to be ready to throw it upon me, was you? Where else but in Plashwater Weir Mill Lock was there a man dressed according as described? Where else but in Plashwater Weir Mill Lock was there a man as had had words with him coming through in his boat? Look at the Lock-keeper in Plashwater Weir Mill Lock, in them same answering clothes and with that same answering red neckhankercher, and see whether his clothes happens to be bloody or not. Yes, they do happen to be bloody. Ah, you sly devil!"

Bradley, very white, sat looking at him in silence.

"But two could play at your game," said Riderhood, snapping his fingers at him half a dozen times, "and I played it long ago; long afore you tried your clumsy hand at it; in days when you hadn't begun croaking your lectors or what not in your school. I know to a figure how you done it. Where you stole away, I could steal away arter you, and do it knowinger than you. I know how you come away from London in your own clothes, and where you changed your clothes, and hid your clothes. I see you with my own eyes take your own clothes from their hiding-place among them felled trees, and take a dip in the river to account for your dressing yourself, to any one as might come by. I see you rise up Bradley Headstone, Master, where you sat down Bargeman. I see you pitch your Bargeman's bundle into the river. I hooked your Bargeman's bundle out of the river. I've got your Bargeman's clothes, tore this way and that way with the scuffle, stained green with the grass, and spattered all over with what bust from the blows. I've got them, and I've got you. I don't care a curse for the T'other governor, alive or dead, but I care a many curses for my own self. And as you laid your plots agin me and was a sly devil agin me, I'll be paid for it—I'll be paid for it—I'll be paid for it—till I've drained you dry!"

Bradley looked at the fire, with a working face, and was silent for a while. At last he said, with what seemed an inconsistent composure of voice and feature:

"You can't get blood out of a stone, Riderhood."

"I can get money out of a schoolmaster though."

"You can't get out of me what is not in me. You can't wrest from me what I have not got. Mine is but a poor calling. You have had more than two guineas from me, already. Do you know how long it has taken me (allowing for a long and arduous training) to earn such a sum?"

"I don't know, nor I don't care. Yours is a 'spectable calling. To save your 'spectability, it's worth your while to pawn every article

of clothes you've got, sell every stick in your house, and beg and borrow every penny you can get trusted with. When you've done that and handed over, I'll leave you. Not afore."

"How do you mean, you'll leave me?"

"I mean as I'll keep you company, wherever you go, when you go away from here. Let the Lock take care of itself. I'll take care of you, once I've got you."

Bradley again looked at the fire. Eyeing him aside, Riderhood took up his pipe, refilled it, lighted it, and sat smoking. Bradley leaned his elbows on his knees, and his head upon his hands, and looked at the fire with a most intent abstraction.

"Riderhood," he said, raising himself in his chair, after a long silence, and drawing out his purse and putting it on the table. "Say I part with this, which is all the money I have; say I let you have my watch; say that every quarter, when I draw my salary, I pay you a certain portion of it."

"Say nothink of the sort," retorted Riderhood, shaking his head as he smoked. "You've got away once, and I won't run the chance agin. I've had trouble enough to find you, and shouldn't have found you, if I hadn't seen you slipping along the street over-night, and watched you till you was safe housed. I'll have one settlement with you for good and all."

"Riderhood, I am a man who has lived a retired life. I have no resources beyond myself. I have absolutely no friends."

"That's a lie," said Riderhood. "You've got one friend as I knows of; one as is good for a Savings-Bank book, or I'm a blue monkey!"

Bradley's face darkened, and his hand slowly closed on the purse and drew it back, as he sat listening for what the other should go on to say.

"I went into the wrong shop, fust, last Thursday," said Riderhood. "Found myself among the young ladies, by George! Over the young ladies, I see a Missis. That Missis is sweet enough upon you, Master, to sell herself up, slap, to get you out of trouble. Make her do it then."

Bradley stared at him so very suddenly that Riderhood, not quite knowing how to take it, affected to be occupied with the encircling smoke from his pipe; fanning it away with his hand, and blowing it off.

"You spoke to the mistress, did you?" inquired Bradley, with that former composure of voice and feature that seemed inconsistent, and with averted eyes.

"Poof! Yes," said Riderhood, withdrawing his attention from the smoke. "I spoke to her. I didn't say much to her. She was put in a fluster by my dropping in among the young ladies (I never did set up for a lady's man), and she took me into her parlour to hope as there was nothink wrong. I tells her, 'O no, nothink wrong. The master's my very good friend.' But I see how the land laid, and that she was comfortable off."

Bradley put the purse in his pocket, grasped his left wrist with his right hand, and sat rigidly contemplating the fire.

"She couldn't live more handy to you than she does," said Rider-

hood, "and when I goes home with you (as of course I am a going), I recommend you to clean her out without loss of time. You can marry her, arter you and me have come to a settlement. She's nice-looking, and I know you can't be keeping company with no one else, having been so lately disapinted in another quarter."

Not one other word did Bradley utter all that night. Not once did he change his attitude, or loosen his hold upon his wrist. Rigid before the fire, as if it were a charmed flame that was turning him old, he sat, with the dark lines deepening in his face, its stare becoming more and more haggard, its surface turning whiter and whiter as if it were being overspread with ashes, and the very texture and colour of his hair degenerating.

Not until the late daylight made the window transparent, did this decaying statue move. Then it slowly arose, and sat in the window looking out.

Riderhood had kept his chair all night. In the earlier part of the night he had muttered twice or thrice that it was bitter cold; or that the fire burnt fast, when he got up to mend it; but, as he could elicit from his companion neither sound nor movement, he had afterwards held his peace. He was making some disorderly preparations for coffee, when Bradley came from the window and put on his outer coat and hat.

"Hadn't us better have a bit o' breakfast afore we start?" said Riderhood. "It ain't good to freeze a empty stomach, Master."

Without a sign to show that he heard, Bradley walked out of the Lock House. Catching up from the table a piece of bread, and taking his Bargeman's bundle under his arm, Riderhood immediately followed him. Bradley turned towards London. Riderhood caught him up, and walked at his side.

The two men trudged on, side by side, in silence, full three miles. Suddenly, Bradley turned to retrace his course. Instantly, Riderhood turned likewise, and they went back side by side.

Bradley re-entered the Lock House. So did Riderhood. Bradley sat down in the window. Riderhood warmed himself at the fire. After an hour or more, Bradley abruptly got up again, and again went out, but this time turned the other way. Riderhood was close after him, caught him up in a few paces, and walked at his side.

This time, as before, when he found his attendant not to be shaken off, Bradley suddenly turned back. This time, as before, Riderhood turned back along with him. But, not this time, as before, did they go into the Lock House, for Bradley came to a stand on the snow-covered turf by the Lock, looking up the river and down the river. Navigation was impeded by the frost, and the scene was a mere white and yellow desert.

"Come, come, Master," urged Riderhood, at his side. "This is a dry game. And where's the good of it? You can't get rid of me, except by coming to a settlement. I am a going along with you wherever you go."

Without a word of reply, Bradley passed quickly from him over the wooden bridge on the lock gates. "Why, there's even less

sense in this move than t'other," said Riderhood, following. "The Weir's there, and you'll have to come back, you know."

Without taking the least notice, Bradley leaned his body against a post, in a resting attitude, and there rested with his eyes cast down. "Being brought here," said Riderhood, gruffly, "I'll turn it to some use by changing my gates." With a rattle and a rush of water, he then swung to the lock gates that were standing open, before opening the others. So, both sets of gates were, for the moment, closed.

"You'd better by far be reasonable, Bradley Headstone, Master," said Riderhood, passing him, "or I'll drain you all the dryer for it, when we do settle.—Ah! Would you!"

Bradley had caught him round the body. He seemed to be girdled with an iron ring. They were on the brink of the Lock, about midway between the two sets of gates.

"Let go!" said Riderhood, "or I'll get my knife out and slash you wherever I can cut you. Let go!"

Bradley was drawing to the Lock-edge. Riderhood was drawing away from it. It was a strong grapple, and a fierce struggle, arm and leg. Bradley got him round, with his back to the Lock, and still worked him backward.

"Let go!" said Riderhood. "Stop! What are you trying at? You can't drown Me. Ain't I told you that the man as has come through drowning can never be drowned? I can't be drowned."

"I can be!" returned Bradley, in a desperate, clenched voice. "I am resolved to be. I'll hold you living, and I'll hold you dead. Come down!"

Riderhood went over into the smooth pit, backward, and Bradley Headstone upon him. When the two were found, lying under the ooze and scum behind one of the rotting gates, Riderhood's hold had relaxed, probably in falling, and his eyes were staring upward. But, he was girdled still with Bradley's iron ring, and the rivets of the iron ring held tight.

CHAPTER XVI.

PERSONS AND THINGS IN GENERAL.

Mr. and Mrs. John Harmon's first delightful occupation was, to set all matters right that had strayed in any way wrong, or that might, could, would, or should, have strayed in any way wrong, while their name was in abeyance. In tracing out affairs for which John's fictitious death was to be considered in any way responsible, they used a very broad and free construction; regarding, for instance, the dolls' dressmaker as having a claim on their protection, because of her association with Mrs. Eugene Wrayburn, and because of Mrs. Eugene's old association, in her turn, with the dark side of the story. It followed that the old man, Riah, as a good and serviceable friend to both, was not to be disclaimed. Nor even Mr. Inspector, as having

been trepanned into an industrious hunt on a false scent. It may be remarked, in connexion with that worthy officer, that a rumour shortly afterwards pervaded the Force, to the effect that he had confided to Miss Abbey Potterson, over a jug of mellow flip in the bar of the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, that he "didn't stand to lose a farthing" through Mr. Harmon's coming to life, but was quite as well satisfied as if that gentleman had been barbarously murdered, and he (Mr. Inspector) had pocketed the government reward.

In all their arrangements of such nature, Mr. and Mrs. John Harmon derived much assistance from their eminent solicitor, Mr. Mortimer Lightwood; who laid about him professionally with such unwonted despatch and intention, that a piece of work was vigorously pursued as soon as cut out; whereby Young Blight was acted on as by that transatlantic dram which is poetically named *An Eye-Opener*, and found himself staring at real clients instead of out of window. The accessibility of Riah proving very useful as to a few hints towards the disentanglement of Eugene's affairs, Lightwood applied himself with infinite zest to attacking and harassing Mr. Fledgeby: who, discovering himself in danger of being blown into the air by certain explosive transactions in which he had been engaged, and having been sufficiently flayed under his beating, came to a parley and asked for quarter. The harmless Twemlow profited by the conditions entered into, though he little thought it. Mr. Riah unaccountably melted; waited in person on him over the stable yard in Duke Street, St. James's, no longer ravening but mild, to inform him that payment of interest as heretofore, but henceforth at Mr. Lightwood's offices, would appease his Jewish rancour; and departed with the secret that Mr. John Harmon had advanced the money and become the creditor. Thus, was the sublime Snigsworth's wrath averted, and thus did he snort no larger amount of moral grandeur at the Corinthian column in the print over the fireplace, than was normally in his (and the British) constitution.

Mrs. Wilfer's first visit to the Mendicant's bride at the new abode of Mendicancy, was a grand event. Pa had been sent for into the City, on the very day of taking possession, and had been stunned with astonishment, and brought-to, and led about the house by one ear, to behold its various treasures, and had been enraptured and enchanted. Pa had also been appointed Secretary, and had been enjoined to give instant notice of resignation to Chicksey, Veneering, and Stobbles, for ever and ever. But Ma came later, and came, as was her due, in state.

The carriage was sent for Ma, who entered it with a bearing worthy of the occasion, accompanied, rather than supported, by Miss Lavinia, who altogether declined to recognize the maternal majesty. Mr. George Sampson meekly followed. He was received in the vehicle, by Mrs. Wilfer, as if admitted to the honor of assisting at a funeral in the family, and she then issued the order, "Onward!" to the Mendicant's menial.

"I wish to goodness, Ma," said Lavvy, throwing herself back among the cushions, with her arms crossed, "that you'd loll a little."

"How!" repeated Mrs. Wilfer. "Loll!"

"Yes, Ma."

"I hope," said the impressive lady, "I am incapable of it."

"I am sure you look so, Ma. But why one should go out to dine with one's own daughter or sister, as if one's under-petticoat was a backboard, I do *not* understand."

"Neither do I understand," retorted Mrs. Wilfer, with deep scorn, "how a young lady can mention the garment in the name of which you have indulged. I blush for you."

"Thank you, Ma," said Lavvy, yawning, "but I can do it for myself, I am obliged to you, when there's any occasion."

Here, Mr. Sampson, with the view of establishing harmony, which he never under any circumstances succeeded in doing, said with an agreeable smile: "After all, you know, ma'am, we know it's there." And immediately felt that he had committed himself.

"We know it's there!" said Mrs. Wilfer, glaring.

"Really, George," remonstrated Miss Lavinia, "I must say that I don't understand your allusions, and that I think you might be more delicate and less personal."

"Go it!" cried Mr. Sampson, becoming, on the shortest notice, a prey to despair. "Oh yes! Go it, Miss Lavinia Wilfer!"

"What you may mean, George Sampson, by your omnibus-driving expressions, I cannot pretend to imagine. Neither," said Miss Lavinia, "Mr. George Sampson, do I wish to imagine. It is enough for me to know in my own heart that I am not going to—" having imprudently got into a sentence without providing a way out of it, Miss Lavinia was constrained to close with "going to go it." A weak conclusion which, however, derived some appearance of strength from disdain.

"Oh yes!" cried Mr. Sampson, with bitterness. "Thus it ever is. I never——"

"If you mean to say," Miss Lavvy cut him short, "that you never brought up a young gazelle, you may save yourself the trouble, because nobody in this carriage supposes that you ever did. We know you better." (As if this were a home-thrust.)

"Lavinia," returned Mr. Sampson, in a dismal vein, "I did not mean to say so. What I did mean to say, was, that I never expected to retain my favoured place in this family, after Fortune shed her beams upon it. Why do you take me," said Mr. Sampson, "to the glittering halls with which I can never compete, and then taunt me with my moderate salary? Is it generous? Is it kind?"

The stately lady, Mrs. Wilfer, perceiving her opportunity of delivering a few remarks from the throne, here took up the altercation.

"Mr. Sampson," she began, "I cannot permit you to misrepresent the intentions of a child of mine."

"Let him alone, Ma," Miss Lavvy interposed with haughtiness. "It is indifferent to me what he says or does."

"Nay, Lavinia," quoth Mrs. Wilfer, "this touches the blood of the family. If Mr. George Sampson attributes, even to my youngest daughter——"

("I don't see why you should use the word 'even,' Ma," Miss Lavvy interposed, "because I am quite as important as any of the others.")

"Peace!" said Mrs. Wilfer, solemnly. "I repeat, If Mr. George Sampson attributes, to my youngest daughter, grovelling motives, he

attributes them equally to the mother of my youngest daughter. That mother repudiates them, and demands of Mr. George Sampson, as a youth of honour, what he *would* have? I may be mistaken—nothing is more likely—but Mr. George Sampson,” proceeded Mrs. Wilfer, majestically waving her gloves, “appears to me to be seated in a first-class equipage. Mr. George Sampson appears to me to be on his way, by his own admission, to a residence that may be termed Palatial. Mr. George Sampson appears to me to be invited to participate in the—shall I say the—Elevation which has descended on the family with which he is ambitious, shall I say to Mingle? Whence, then, this tone on Mr. Sampson’s part?”

“It is only, ma’am,” Mr. Sampson explained, in exceedingly low spirits, “because, in a pecuniary sense, I am painfully conscious of my unworthiness. Lavinia is now highly connected. Can I hope that she will still remain the same Lavinia as of old? And is it not pardonable if I feel sensitive, when I see a disposition on her part to take me up short?”

“If you are not satisfied with your position, sir,” observed Miss Lavinia, with much politeness, “we can set you down at any turning you may please to indicate to my sister’s coachman.”

“Dearest Lavinia,” urged Mr. Sampson, pathetically, “I adore you.”

“Then if you can’t do it in a more agreeable manner,” returned the young lady, “I wish you wouldn’t.”

“I also,” pursued Mr. Sampson, “respect you, ma’am, to an extent which must ever be below your merits, I am well aware, but still up to an uncommon mark. Bear with a wretch, Lavinia, bear with a wretch, ma’am, who feels the noble sacrifices you make for him, but is goaded almost to madness,” Mr. Sampson slapped his forehead, “when he thinks of competing with the rich and influential.”

“When you have to compete with the rich and influential, it will probably be mentioned to you,” said Miss Lavvy, “in good time. At least, it will if the case is *my* case.”

Mr. Sampson immediately expressed his fervent opinion that this was “more than human,” and was brought upon his knees at Miss Lavinia’s feet.

It was the crowning addition indispensable to the full enjoyment of both mother and daughter, to bear Mr. Sampson, a grateful captive, into the glittering halls he had mentioned, and to parade him through the same, at once a living witness of their glory, and a bright instance of their condescension. Ascending the staircase, Miss Lavinia permitted him to walk at her side, with the air of saying: “Notwithstanding all these surroundings, I am yours as yet, George. How long it may last is another question, but I am yours as yet.” She also benignantly intimated to him, aloud, the nature of the objects upon which he looked, and to which he was unaccustomed: as, “Exotics, George,” “An aviary, George,” “An ormolu clock, George,” and the like. While, through the whole of the decorations, Mrs. Wilfer led the way with the bearing of a Savage Chief, who would feel himself compromised by manifesting the slightest token of surprise or admiration.

Indeed, the bearing of this impressive woman, throughout the day,

was a pattern to all impressive women under similar circumstances. She renewed the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, as if Mr. and Mrs. Boffin had said of her what she had said of them, and as if Time alone could quite wear her injury out. She regarded every servant who approached her, as her sworn enemy, expressly intending to offer her affronts with the dishes, and to pour forth outrages on her moral feelings from the decanters. She sat erect at table, on the right hand of her son-in-law, as half suspecting poison in the viands, and as bearing up with native force of character against other deadly ambushes. Her carriage towards Bella was as a carriage towards a young lady of good position, whom she had met in society a few years ago. Even when, slightly thawing under the influence of sparkling champagne, she related to her son-in-law some passages of domestic interest concerning her papa, she infused into the narrative such Arctic suggestions of her having been an unappreciated blessing to mankind, since her papa's days, and also of that gentleman's having been a frosty impersonation of a frosty race, as struck cold to the very soles of the feet of the hearers. The Inexhaustible being produced, staring, and evidently intending a weak and washy smile shortly, no sooner beheld her, than it was stricken spasmodic and inconsolable. When she took her leave at last, it would have been hard to say whether it was with the air of going to the scaffold herself, or of leaving the inmates of the house for immediate execution. Yet, John Harmon enjoyed it all merrily, and told his wife, when he and she were alone, that her natural ways had never seemed so dearly natural as beside this foil, and that although he did not dispute her being her father's daughter, he should ever remain steadfast in the faith that she could not be her mother's.

This visit was, as has been said, a grand event. Another event, not grand but deemed in the house a special one, occurred at about the same period; and this was, the first interview between Mr. Sloppy and Miss Wren.

The dolls' dressmaker, being at work for the Inexhaustible upon a full-dressed doll some two sizes larger than that young person, Mr. Sloppy undertook to call for it, and did so.

"Come in, sir," said Miss Wren, who was working at her bench. "And who may you be?"

Mr. Sloppy introduced himself by name and buttons.

"Oh indeed!" cried Jenny. "Ah! I have been looking forward to knowing you. I heard of your distinguishing yourself."

"Did you, Miss?" grinned Sloppy. "I am sure I am glad to hear it, but I don't know how."

"Pitching somebody into a mud-cart," said Miss Wren.

"Oh! That way!" cried Sloppy. "Yes, Miss." And threw back his head and laughed.

"Bless us!" exclaimed Miss Wren, with a start. "Don't open your mouth as wide as that, young man, or it'll catch so, and not shut again some day."

Mr. Sloppy opened it, if possible, wider, and kept it open until his laugh was out.

"Why, you're like the giant," said Miss Wren, "when he came home in the land of Beanstalk, and wanted Jack for supper."

"Was he good-looking, Miss?" asked Sloppy.

"No," said Miss Wren. "Ugly."

Her visitor glanced round the room—which had many comforts in it now, that had not been in it before—and said: "This is a pretty place, Miss."

"Glad you think so, sir," returned Miss Wren. "And what do you think of Me?"

The honesty of Mr. Sloppy being severely taxed by the question, he twisted a button, grinned, and faltered.

"Out with it!" said Miss Wren, with an arch look. "Don't you think me a queer little comicality?" In shaking her head at him after asking the question, she shook her hair down.

"Oh!" cried Sloppy, in a burst of admiration. "What a lot, and what a colour!"

Miss Wren, with her usual expressive hitch, went on with her work. But, left her hair as it was; not displeased by the effect it had made.

"You don't live here alone; do you, Miss?" asked Sloppy.

"No," said Miss Wren, with a chop. "Live here with my fairy godmother."

"With;" Mr. Sloppy couldn't make it out; "with who did you say, Miss?"

"Well!" replied Miss Wren, more seriously. "With my second father. Or with my first, for that matter." And she shook her head, and drew a sigh. "If you had known a poor child I used to have here," she added, "you'd have understood me. But you didn't, and you can't. All the better!"

"You must have been taught a long time," said Sloppy, glancing at the array of dolls in hand, "before you came to work so neatly, Miss, and with such a pretty taste."

"Never was taught a stitch, young man!" returned the dress-maker, tossing her head. "Just gobbled and gobbled, till I found out how to do it. Badly enough at first, but better now."

"And here have I," said Sloppy, in something of a self-reproachful tone, "been a learning and a learning, and here has Mr. Boffin been a paying and a paying, ever so long!"

"I have heard what your trade is," observed Miss Wren; "it's cabinet-making."

Mr. Sloppy nodded. "Now that the Mounds is done with, it is. I'll tell you what, Miss. I should like to make you something."

"Much obliged. But what?"

"I could make you," said Sloppy, surveying the room, "I could make you a handy set of nests to lay the dolls in. Or I could make you a handy little set of drawers, to keep your silks and threads and scraps in. Or I could turn you a rare handle for that crutch-stick, if it belongs to him you call your father."

"It belongs to me," returned the little creature, with a quick flush of her face and neck. "I am lame."

Poor Sloppy flushed too, for there was an instinctive delicacy

behind his buttons, and his own hand had struck it. He said, perhaps, the best thing in the way of amends that could be said. "I am very glad it's yours, because I'd rather ornament it for you than for any one else. Please may I look at it?"

Miss Wren was in the act of handing it to him over her bench, when she paused. "But you had better see me use it," she said, sharply. "This is the way. Hoppetty, Kicketty, Pep-peg-peg. Not pretty; is it?"

"It seems to me that you hardly want it at all," said Sloppy.

The little dressmaker sat down again, and gave it into his hand, saying, with that better look upon her, and with a smile: "Thank you!"

"And as concerning the nests and the drawers," said Sloppy, after measuring the handle on his sleeve, and softly standing the stick aside against the wall, "why, it would be a real pleasure to me. I've heard tell that you can sing most beautiful; and I should be better paid with a song than with any money, for I always loved the likes of that, and often giv' Mrs. Higden and Johnny a comic song myself, with 'Spoken' in it. Though that's not your sort, I'll wager."

"You are a very kind young man," returned the dressmaker; "a really kind young man. I accept your offer.—I suppose He won't mind," she added as an afterthought, shrugging her shoulders; "and if he does, he may!"

"Meaning him that you call your father, Miss," asked Sloppy.

"No, no," replied Miss Wren. "Him, Him, Him!"

"Him, him, him?" repeated Sloppy; staring about, as if for Him.

"Him who is coming to court and marry me," returned Miss Wren. "Dear me, how slow you are!"

"Oh! *Him!*" said Sloppy. And seemed to turn thoughtful and a little troubled. "I never thought of him. When is he coming, Miss?"

"What a question!" cried Miss Wren. "How should I know!"

"Where is he coming from, Miss?"

"Why, good gracious, how can I tell! He is coming from somewhere or other, I suppose, and he is coming some day or other, I suppose. I don't know any more about him, at present."

This tickled Mr. Sloppy as an extraordinarily good joke, and he threw back his head and laughed with measureless enjoyment. At the sight of him laughing in that absurd way, the dolls' dressmaker laughed very heartily indeed. So they both laughed, till they were tired.

"There, there, there!" said Miss Wren. "For goodness' sake, stop, Giant, or I shall be swallowed up alive, before I know it. And to this minute you haven't said what you've come for."

"I have come for little Miss Harmonses doll," said Sloppy.

"I thought as much," remarked Miss Wren, "and here is little Miss Harmonses doll waiting for you. She's folded up in silver paper, you see, as if she was wrapped from head to foot in new Bank notes. Take care of her, and there's my hand, and thank you again."

"I'll take more care of her than if she was a gold image," said

Sloppy, "and there's both *my* hands, Miss, and I'll soon come back again."

But, the greatest event of all, in the new life of Mr. and Mrs. John Harmon, was a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Wrayburn. Sadly wan and worn was the once gallant Eugene, and walked resting on his wife's arm, and leaning heavily upon a stick. But, he was daily growing stronger and better, and it was declared by the medical attendants that he might not be much disfigured by-and-by. It was a grand event, indeed, when Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Wrayburn came to stay at Mr. and Mrs. John Harmon's house: where, by the way, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin (exquisitely happy, and daily cruising about, to look at shops,) were likewise staying indefinitely.

To Mr. Eugene Wrayburn, in confidence, did Mrs. John Harmon impart what she had known of the state of his wife's affections, in his reckless time. And to Mrs. John Harmon, in confidence, did Mr. Eugene Wrayburn impart that, please God, she should see how his wife had changed him!

"I make no protestations," said Eugene; "—who does, who means them!—I have made a resolution."

"But would you believe, Bella," interposed his wife, coming to resume her nurse's place at his side, for he never got on well without her: "that on our wedding day he told me he almost thought the best thing he could do, was to die?"

"As I didn't do it, Lizzie," said Eugene, "I'll do that better thing you suggested—for your sake."

That same afternoon, Eugene lying on his couch in his own room upstairs, Lightwood came to chat with him, while Bella took his wife out for a ride. "Nothing short of force will make her go," Eugene had said; so, Bella had playfully forced her.

"Dear old fellow," Eugene began with Lightwood, reaching up his hand, "you couldn't have come at a better time, for my mind is full, and I want to empty it. First, of my present, before I touch upon my future. M. R. F., who is a much younger cavalier than I, and a professed admirer of beauty, was so affable as to remark the other day (he paid us a visit of two days up the river there, and much objected to the accommodation of the hotel), that Lizzie ought to have her portrait painted. Which, coming from M. R. F., may be considered equivalent to a melodramatic blessing."

"You are getting well," said Mortimer, with a smile.

"Really," said Eugene, "I mean it. When M. R. F. said that, and followed it up by rolling the claret (for which he called, and I paid), in his mouth, and saying, 'My dear son, why do you drink this trash?' it was tantamount—in him—to a paternal benediction on our union, accompanied with a gush of tears. The coolness of M. R. F. is not to be measured by ordinary standards."

"True enough," said Lightwood.

"That's all," pursued Eugene, "that I shall ever hear from M. R. F. on the subject, and he will continue to saunter through the world with his hat on one side. My marriage being thus solemnly recognized at the family altar, I have no further trouble on

that score. Next, you really have done wonders for me, Mortimer, in easing my money-perplexities, and with such a guardian and steward beside me, as the preserver of my life (I am hardly strong yet, you see, for I am not man enough to refer to her without a trembling voice—she is so inexpressibly dear to me, Mortimer!), the little that I can call my own will be more than it ever has been. It need be more, for you know what it always has been in my hands. Nothing.”

“Worse than nothing, I fancy, Eugene. My own small income (I devoutly wish that my grandfather had left it to the Ocean rather than to me!) has been an effective Something, in the way of preventing me from turning to at Anything. And I think yours has been much the same.”

“There spake the voice of wisdom,” said Eugene. “We are shepherds both. In turning to at last, we turn to in earnest. Let us say no more of that, for a few years to come. Now, I have had an idea, Mortimer, of taking myself and my wife to one of the colonies, and working at my vocation there.”

“I should be lost without you, Eugene; but you may be right.”

“No,” said Eugene, emphatically. “Not right. Wrong!”

He said it with such a lively—almost angry—flash, that Mortimer showed himself greatly surprised.

“You think this thumped head of mine is excited?” Eugene went on, with a high look; “not so, believe me. I can say to you of the healthful music of my pulse what Hamlet said of his. My blood is up, but wholesomely up, when I think of it. Tell me! Shall I turn coward to Lizzie, and sneak away with her, as if I were ashamed of her! Where would your friend’s part in this world be, Mortimer, if she had turned coward to him, and on immeasurably better occasion?”

“Honorable and stanch,” said Lightwood. “And yet, Eugene——”

“And yet what, Mortimer?”

“And yet, are you sure that you might not feel (for her sake, I say for her sake) any slight coldness towards her on the part of—Society?”

O! You and I may well stumble at the word,” returned Eugene, laughing. “Do we mean our Tippins?”

“Perhaps we do,” said Mortimer, laughing also.

“Faith, we do!” returned Eugene, with great animation. “We may hide behind the bush and beat about it, but we do! Now, my wife is something nearer to my heart, Mortimer, than Tippins is, and I owe her a little more than I owe to Tippins, and I am rather prouder of her than I ever was of Tippins. Therefore, I will fight it out to the last gasp, with her and for her, here, in the open field. When I hide her, or strike for her, faint-heartedly, in a hole or a corner, do you whom I love next best upon earth, tell me what I shall most righteously deserve to be told:—that she would have done well to turn me over with her foot that night when I lay bleeding to death, and spat in my dastard face.”

The glow that shone upon him as he spoke the words, so irradiated his features that he looked, for the time, as though he had never been mutilated. His friend responded as Eugene would have had

him respond, and they discoursed of the future until Lizzie came back. After resuming her place at his side, and tenderly touching his hands and his head, she said :

"Eugene, dear, you made me go out, but I ought to have stayed with you. You are more flushed than you have been for many days. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing," replied Eugene, "but looking forward to your coming back."

"And talking to Mr. Lightwood," said Lizzie, turning to him with a smile. "But it cannot have been Society that disturbed you."

"Faith, my dear love!" retorted Eugene, in his old airy manner, as he laughed and kissed her, "I rather think it *was* Society though!"

The word ran so much in Mortimer Lightwood's thoughts as he went home to the Temple that night, that he resolved to take a look at Society, which he had not seen for a considerable period.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

THE VOICE OF SOCIETY.

BEHOVES Mortimer Lightwood, therefore, to answer a dinner card from Mr. and Mrs. Veneering requesting the honor, and to signify that Mr. Mortimer Lightwood will be happy to have the other honor. The Veneerings have been, as usual, indefatigably dealing dinner cards to Society, and whoever desires to take a hand had best be quick about it, for it is written in the Books of the Insolvent Fates that Veneering shall make a resounding smash next week. Yes. Having found out the clue to that great mystery how people can contrive to live beyond their means, and having over-jobbed his jobberies as legislator deputed to the Universe by the pure electors of Pocket Breeches, it shall come to pass next week that Veneering will accept the Chiltern Hundreds, that the legal gentleman in Britannia's confidence will again accept the Pocket Breeches Thousands, and that the Veneerings will retire to Calais, there to live on Mrs. Veneering's diamonds (in which Mr. Veneering, as a good husband, has from time to time invested considerable sums), and to relate to Neptune and others, how that, before Veneering retired from Parliament, the House of Commons was composed of himself and the six hundred and fifty-seven dearest and oldest friends he had in the world. It shall likewise come to pass, at as nearly as possible the same period, that Society will discover that it always did despise Veneering, and distrust Veneering, and that when it went to Veneering's to dinner it always had misgivings—though very secretly at the time, it would seem, and in a perfectly private and confidential manner.

The next week's books of the Insolvent Fates, however, being not yet opened, there is the usual rush to the Veneerings, of the people who

go to their house to dine with one another and not with them. There is Lady Tippins. There are Podsnap the Great, and Mrs. Podsnap. There is Twemlow. There are Buffer, Boots, and Brewer. There is the Contractor, who is Providence to five hundred thousand men. There is the Chairman, travelling three thousand miles per week. There is the brilliant genius who turned the shares into that remarkably exact sum of three hundred and seventy five thousand pounds, no shillings, and nopence.

To whom, add Mortimer Lightwood, coming in among them with a reassumption of his old languid air, founded on Eugene, and belonging to the days when he told the story of the man from Somewhere.

That fresh fairy, Tippins, all but screams at sight of her false swain. She summons the deserter to her with her fan; but the deserter, predetermined not to come, talks Britain with Podsnap. Podsnap always talks Britain, and talks as if he were a sort of Private Watchman employed, in the British interests, against the rest of the world. "We know what Russia means, sir," says Podsnap; "we know what France wants; we see what America is up to; but we know what England is. That's enough for us."

However, when dinner is served, and Lightwood drops into his old place over against Lady Tippins, she can be fended off no longer. "Long banished Robinson Crusoe," says the charmer, exchanging salutations, "how did you leave the Island?"

"Thank you," says Lightwood. "It made no complaint of being in pain anywhere."

"Say, how did you leave the savages?" asks Lady Tippins.

"They were becoming civilized when I left Juan Fernandez," says Lightwood. "At least they were eating one another, which looked like it."

"Tormentor!" returns the dear young creature. "You know what I mean, and you trifle with my impatience. Tell me something, immediately, about the married pair. You were at the wedding."

"Was I, by-the-by?" Mortimer pretends, at great leisure, to consider. "So I was!"

"How was the bride dressed? In rowing costume?"

Mortimer looks gloomy, and declines to answer.

"I hope she steered herself, skiffed herself, paddled herself, larboarded and starboarded herself, or whatever the technical term may be, to the ceremony?" proceeds the playful Tippins.

"However she got to it, she graced it," says Mortimer.

Lady Tippins with a skittish little scream, attracts the general attention. "Graced it! Take care of me if I faint, Veneering. He means to tell us, that a horrid female waterman is graceful!"

"Pardon me. I mean to tell you nothing, Lady Tippins," replies Lightwood. And keeps his word by eating his dinner with a show of the utmost indifference.

"You shall not escape me in this way, you morose backwoods-man," retorts Lady Tippins. "You shall not evade the question, to screen your friend Eugene, who has made this exhibition of himself. The knowledge shall be brought home to you that such a ridiculous affair is condemned by the voice of Society. My dear Mrs. Veneering,

do let us resolve ourselves into a Committee of the whole House on the subject."

Mrs. Veneering, always charmed by this rattling sylph, cries: "Oh yes! Do let us resolve ourselves into a Committee of the whole House! So delicious!" Veneering says, "As many as are of that opinion, say Aye,—contrary, No—the Ayes have it." But nobody takes the slightest notice of his joke.

"Now, I am Chairwoman of Committees!" cries Lady Tippins.

("What spirits she has!" exclaims Mrs. Veneering; to whom likewise nobody attends.)

"And this," pursues the sprightly one, "is a Committee of the whole House to what-you-may-call-it—elicit, I suppose—the voice of Society. The question before the Committee is, whether a young man of very fair family, good appearance, and some talent, makes a fool or a wise man of himself in marrying a female waterman, turned factory girl."

"Hardly so, I think," the stubborn Mortimer strikes in. "I take the question to be, whether such a man as you describe, Lady Tippins, does right or wrong in marrying a brave woman (I say nothing of her beauty), who has saved his life, with a wonderful energy and address; whom he knows to be virtuous, and possessed of remarkable qualities; whom he has long admired, and who is deeply attached to him."

"But, excuse me," says Podsnap, with his temper and his shirt-collar about equally rumpled; "was this young woman ever a female waterman?"

"Never. But she sometimes rowed in a boat with her father, I believe."

General sensation against the young woman. Brewer shakes his head. Boots shakes his head. Buffer shakes his head.

"And now, Mr. Lightwood, was she ever," pursues Podsnap, with his indignation rising high into those hair-brushes of his, "a factory girl?"

"Never. But she had some employment in a paper mill, I believe."

General sensation repeated. Brewer says, "Oh dear!" Boots says, "Oh dear!" Buffer says, "Oh dear!" All, in a rumbling tone of protest.

"Then all I have to say is," returns Podsnap, putting the thing away with his right arm, "that my gorge rises against such a marriage—that it offends and disgusts me—that it makes me sick—and that I desire to know no more about it."

("Now I wonder," thinks Mortimer, amused, "whether *you* are the Voice of Society!")

"Hear, hear, hear!" cries Lady Tippins. "Your opinion of this *mésalliance*, honorable colleague of the honorable member who has just sat down?"

Mrs. Podsnap is of opinion that in these matters there should be an equality of station and fortune, and that a man accustomed to Society should look out for a woman accustomed to Society and capable of bearing her part in it with—an ease and elegance of carriage—that." Mrs. Podsnap stops there, delicately intimating that every

such man should look out for a fine woman as nearly resembling herself as he may hope to discover.

("Now I wonder," thinks Mortimer, "whether *you* are the Voice!")

Lady Tippins next canvasses the Contractor, of five hundred thousand power. It appears to this potentate, that what the man in question should have done, would have been, to buy the young woman a boat and a small annuity, and set her up for herself. These things are a question of beefsteaks and porter. You buy the young woman a boat. Very good. You buy her, at the same time, a small annuity. You speak of that annuity in pounds sterling, but it is in reality so many pounds of beefsteaks and so many pints of porter. On the one hand, the young woman has the boat. On the other hand, she consumes so many pounds of beefsteaks and so many pints of porter. Those beefsteaks and that porter are the fuel to that young woman's engine. She derives therefrom a certain amount of power to row the boat; that power will produce so much money; you add that to the small annuity; and thus you get at the young woman's income. That (it seems to the Contractor) is the way of looking at it.

The fair enslaver having fallen into one of her gentle sleeps during this last exposition, nobody likes to wake her. Fortunately, she comes awake of herself, and puts the question to the Wandering Chairman. The Wanderer can only speak of the case as if it were his own. If such a young woman as the young woman described, had saved his own life, he would have been very much obliged to her, wouldn't have married her, and would have got her a berth in an Electric Telegraph Office, where young women answer very well.

What does the Genius of the three hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds, no shillings, and nopence, think? He can't say what he thinks, without asking: Had the young woman any money?

"No," says Lightwood, in an uncompromising voice; "no money."

"Madness and moonshine," is then the compressed verdict of the Genius. "A man may do anything lawful, for money. But for no money!—Bosh!"

What does Boots say?

Boots says he wouldn't have done it under twenty thousand pound

What does Brewer say?

Brewer says what Boots says.

What does Buffer say?

Buffer says he knows a man who married a bathing-woman, and bolted.

Lady Tippins fancies she has collected the suffrages of the whole Committee (nobody dreaming of asking the Veneerings for their opinion), when, looking round the table through her eyeglass, she perceives Mr. Twemlow with his hand to his forehead.

Good gracious! My Twemlow forgotten! My dearest! My own! What is his vote?

Twemlow has the air of being ill at ease, as he takes his hand from his forehead and replies.

"I am disposed to think," says he, "that this is a question of the feelings of a gentleman."

"A gentleman can have no feelings who contracts such a marriage," flushes Podsnap.

"Pardon me, sir," says Twemlow, rather less mildly than usual, "I don't agree with you. If this gentleman's feelings of gratitude, of respect, of admiration, and affection, induced him (as I presume they did) to marry this lady——"

"This lady!" echoes Podsnap.

"Sir," returns Twemlow, with his wristbands bristling a little, "*you* repeat the word: *I* repeat the word. This lady. What else would you call her, if the gentleman were present?"

This being something in the nature of a poser for Podsnap, he merely waves it away with a speechless wave.

"I say," resumes Twemlow, "if such feelings on the part of this gentleman, induced this gentleman to marry this lady, I think he is the greater gentleman for the action, and makes her the greater lady. I beg to say, that when I use the word, gentleman, I use it in the sense in which the degree may be attained by any man. The feelings of a gentleman I hold sacred, and I confess I am not comfortable when they are made the subject of sport or general discussion."

"I should like to know," sneers Podsnap, "whether your noble relation would be of your opinion."

"Mr. Podsnap," retorts Twemlow, "permit me. He might be, or he might not be. I cannot say. But, I could not allow even him to dictate to me on a point of great delicacy, on which I feel very strongly."

Somehow, a canopy of wet blanket seems to descend upon the company, and Lady Tippins was never known to turn so very greedy or so very cross. Mortimer Lightwood alone brightens. He has been asking himself, as to every other member of the Committee in turn, "I wonder whether you are the Voice!" But he does not ask himself the question after Twemlow has spoken, and he glances in Twemlow's direction as if he were grateful. When the company disperse—by which time Mr. and Mrs. Veneering have had quite as much as they want of the honor, and the guests have had quite as much as *they* want of the other honor—Mortimer sees Twemlow home, shakes hands with him cordially at parting, and fares to the Temple, gaily.

THE END.

POSTSCRIPT,

IN LIEU OF PREFACE.

WHEN I devised this story, I foresaw the likelihood that a class of readers and commentators would suppose that I was at great pains to conceal exactly what I was at great pains to suggest: namely, that Mr. John Harmon was not slain, and that Mr. John Rokesmith was he. Pleasing myself with the idea that the supposition might in part arise out of some ingenuity in the story, and thinking it worth while, in the interests of art, to hint to an audience that an artist (of whatever denomination) may perhaps be trusted to know what he is about in his vocation, if they will concede him a little patience, I was not alarmed by the anticipation.

To keep for a long time unsuspected, yet always working itself out, another purpose originating in that leading incident, and turning it to a pleasant and useful account at last, was at once the most interesting and the most difficult part of my design. Its difficulty was much enhanced by the mode of publication; for, it would be very unreasonable to expect that many readers, pursuing a story in portions from month to month through nineteen months, will, until

they have it before them complete, perceive the relations of its finer threads to the whole pattern which is always before the eyes of the story-weaver at his loom. Yet, that I hold the advantages of the mode of publication to outweigh its disadvantages, may be easily believed of one who revived it in the *Pickwick Papers* after long disuse, and has pursued it ever since.

There is sometimes an odd disposition in this country to dispute as improbable in fiction, what are the commonest experiences in fact. Therefore, I note here, though it may not be at all necessary, that there are hundreds of Will Cases (as they are called), far more remarkable than that fancied in this book; and that the stores of the Prerogative Office teem with instances of testators who have made, changed, contradicted, hidden, forgotten, left cancelled, and left uncanceled, each many more wills than were ever made by the elder Mr. Harmon of Harmony Jail.

In my social experiences since Mrs. Betty Higden came upon the scene and left it, I have found Circumlocutional champions disposed to be warm with me on the subject of my view of the Poor Law. My friend Mr. Bounderby could never see any difference between leaving the Coketown "hands" exactly as they were, and requiring them to be fed with turtle soup and venison out of gold spoons. Idiotic propositions of a parallel nature have been freely offered for my acceptance, and I have been called upon to admit that I would give Poor Law relief to anybody, anywhere, anyhow. Putting this nonsense aside, I have observed a suspicious tendency in the champions to divide into two parties; the one, contending that there are no deserving Poor who prefer death by slow starvation and bitter weather, to the mercies of some Relieving Officers and some Union Houses; the other, admitting that there are such Poor, but

denying that they have any cause or reason for what they do. The records in our newspapers, the late exposure by THE LANCET, and the common sense and senses of common people, furnish too abundant evidence against both defences. But, that my view of the Poor Law may not be mistaken or misrepresented, I will state it. I believe there has been in England, since the days of the STUARTS, no law so often infamously administered, no law so often openly violated, no law habitually so ill-supervised. In the majority of the shameful cases of disease and death from destitution, that shock the Public and disgrace the country, the illegality is quite equal to the inhumanity—and known language could say no more of their lawlessness.

On Friday the Ninth of June in the present year, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin (in their manuscript dress of receiving Mr. and Mrs. Lammle at breakfast) were on the South Eastern Railway with me, in a terribly destructive accident. When I had done what I could to help others, I climbed back into my carriage—nearly turned over a viaduct, and caught aslant upon the turn—to extricate the worthy couple. They were much soiled, but otherwise unhurt. The same happy result attended Miss Bella Wilfer on her wedding day, and Mr. Riderhood inspecting Bradley Headstone's red neckerchief as he lay asleep. I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be much nearer parting company with my readers for ever, than I was then, until there shall be written against my life, the two words with which I have this day closed this book :—THE END.

September 2nd, 1865.

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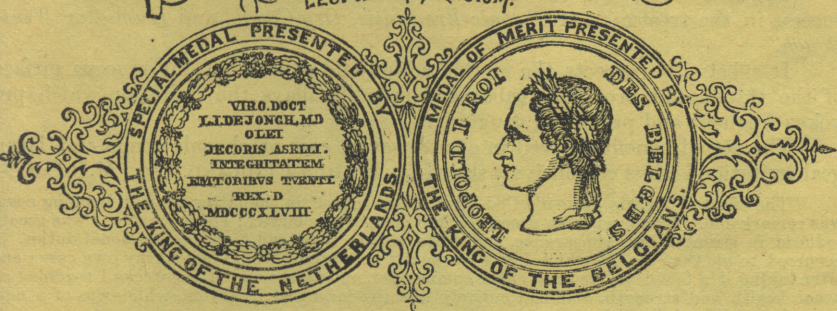
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IV.—It is borne with facility by the most delicate stomach, and improves the functions of digestion and assimilation.

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VI.—From the unequalled rapidity of its curative effects, it is infinitely more economical than any which is offered, even at the lowest price.

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[For further Select Medical Opinions see other side.

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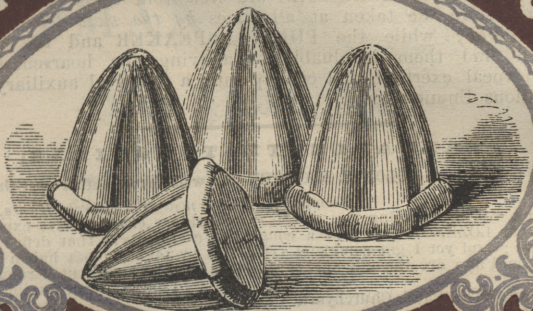
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To Mr. G. DRAYTON, Shrewsbury.

I remain, yours truly,

JOHN S. TOFT.

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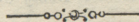
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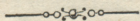
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Profit for Seven Years 1853 to 1859 **724,117**

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1825	2034 5 10	1060 17 6	97 "
1835	1729 4 2	802 2 6	91 "
1845	1417 15 10	543 7 6	77 "
1855	1191 19 7	284 12 6	67 "

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1 Year	£29 1 8	£9 13 2	33 per cent.
10 Years	290 16 8	173 14 0	60 per cent.
20 Years	581 13 4	439 16 4	76 per cent.
30 Years	872 10 0	774 7 1	89 per cent.
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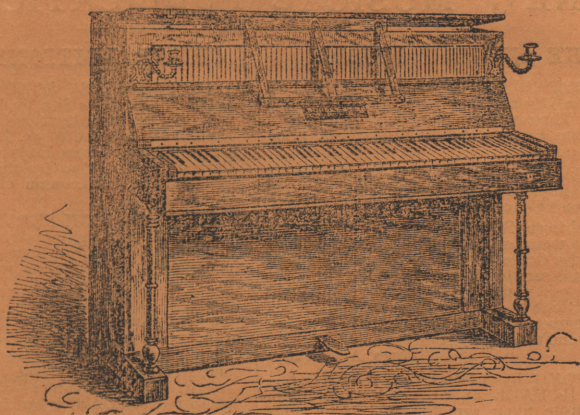
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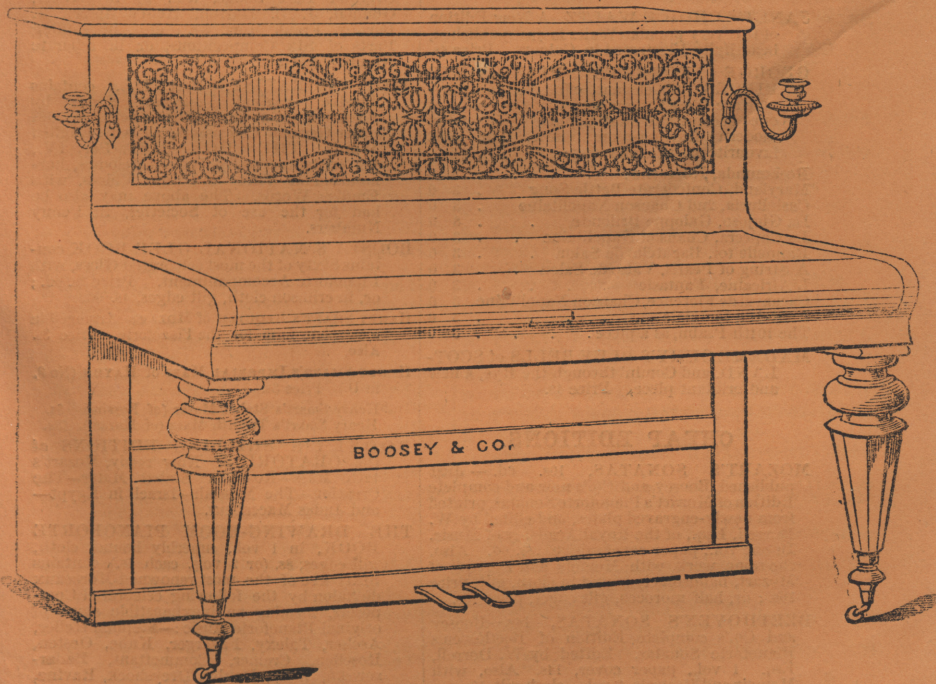
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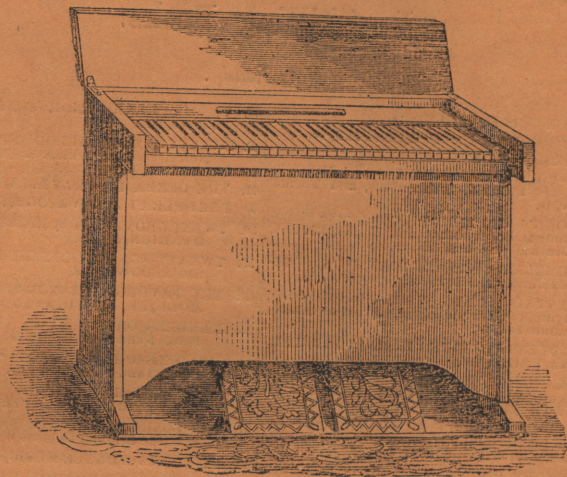
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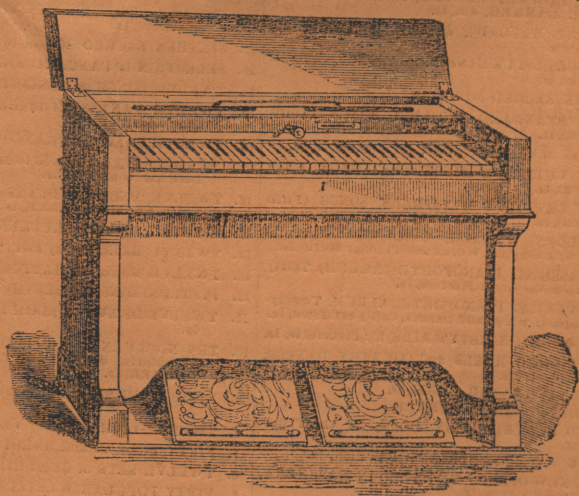
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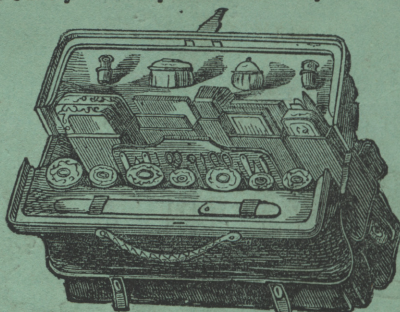
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Japanned Deal Goods may be seen in complete suites of five or six different colours, some of them light and ornamental, and others of a plainer description. Suites of Stained Deal Gothic Furniture, Polished Deal, Oak, and Walnut, are also set apart in separate rooms, so that customers are able to see the effect as it would appear in their own rooms. A Suite of very superior Gothic Oak Furniture will generally be kept in stock, and from time to time new and select Furniture in various woods will be added.

Bed Furnitures are fitted to the Bedsteads in large numbers, so that a complete assortment may be seen, and the effect of any particular pattern ascertained as it would appear on the Bedstead.

A very large stock of Bedding (HEAL and SON's original trade) is placed on the BEDSTEADS.

The stock of Mahogany Goods for the better Bed-rooms, and Japanned Goods for plain and Servants' use, is very greatly increased. The entire Stock is arranged in eight rooms, six galleries, each 120 feet long, and two large ground floors, the whole forming as complete an assortment of Bed-room Furniture as they think can possibly be desired.

Every attention is paid to the manufacture of the Cabinet work; and they have just erected large Workshops on the premises for this purpose, that the manufacture may be under their own immediate care.

Their Bedding trade receives their constant and personal attention, every article being made on the premises.

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